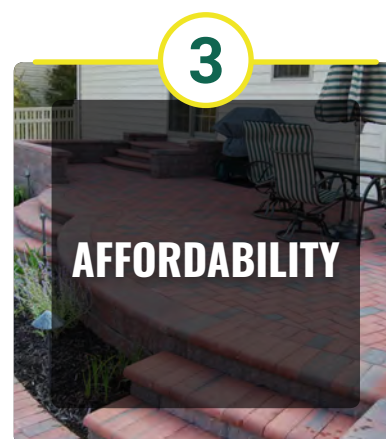
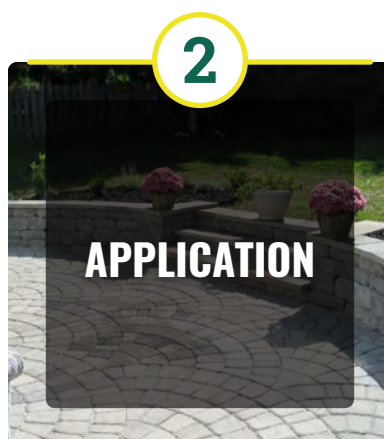
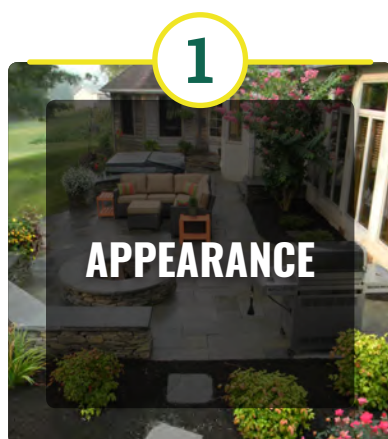


HARDSCAPE MATERIALS: NATURAL VERSUS MANUFACTURED

Hardscaping has long been an integral part of residential and commercial landscapes. Walkways, walls, patios, water and fire features add detail and sophistication while extending space and expanding the seasons in which you can use your landscape.

One of the first questions that usually comes up is whether to use natural stone or manufactured stone. Natural stone is quarried directly from the earth and hand- or machine- cut for specific uses; think slate or flagstone. Manufactured stone is a concrete product formed in a factory for specific uses. Usually, the visual difference is obvious, but not always! One of the most popular new products in hardscaping is a ceramic tile designed for outdoor use. Offering stunning colors and unique finishes, ceramics add an entirely new dimension to hardscapes.

With so many options, we thought it was a good time to talk about some of the differences between natural stone and manufactured stone. We'll focus on three key areas:



1 Appearance

Advances in technology have made it harder to tell the difference between some kinds of natural and manufactured stone. A manufactured block retaining wall is often obviously man-made, but the manufactured veneer stone on the façade of a house or your favorite restaurant might look very natural. A primary complaint about manufactured stone is the way it can fade or discolor over time. Manufactured stone can also develop white crystalline deposits, called efflorescence, which is very difficult to remove.

Natural stone is available in a seemingly endless rainbow of colors and textures that manufactured stone simply can't duplicate. Natural stone also tends to "patina" in a very natural and attractive way, adding additional beauty and value over time.



2 Application

The specific project you are planning will likely play a part in the type of stone that is recommended. Both natural stone and manufactured stone have limitations to how they can be used, especially in structural features like retaining walls, piers and columns. Working with an experienced designer who is certified by the Interlocking Concrete Paver Institute and the National Concrete Masonry Association will ensure that you get the best guidance possible.



3 Affordability

While costs vary, generally you will find that manufactured stone is less expensive than natural stone. Add professional installation and that gap widens, since natural stone requires more preparation and hand work to install properly. If you are considering a DIY project, manufactured stone is much easier to use because it is more uniform and consistent in weight and dimension.



When the time comes for you to choose between natural or manufactured stone in your hardscape project, be sure to consider these points. If you would like additional guidance or help with design and installation, give us a call at 717-292-5696 or visit us online at www.hivelylandscapes.com.

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