

flagstone forever

Take a fresh look at this landscaping material to create paths and patios that match toughness with personality.



A STEP UP

Groundcovers in the gaps, such as these tufts of mondo grass, soften the look of a flagstone path. (For more groundcover ideas, see page 62.)

As a hardscaping material, flagstone has a solid reputation. It withstands all climates, lasts decades, and needs almost no maintenance. But these days its versatility is earning it increased respect. “Flagstone is being worked into more designs, including contemporary ones,” says California-based landscape designer Nicole Cook. Flagstone—any type of flat sedimentary rock—ranges from light buffs to dark reds, with blues and greens between. The shards can be cut into uniform shapes for a clean-lined look or left natural and pieced together like a puzzle for an organic appearance. To get to know the options and design possibilities, turn the page.

STONE TYPES



Flagstone varies regionally depending on the sedimentary rock of the area. To give a garden a sense of place—and often save on cost—choose a native flagstone. It typically ranges from 1 to 1½ inches thick.



1 CHERRY HILL LIMESTONE

Rich ochre pairs well with buff-color gravel. Native to Arkansas and Oklahoma.

2 BLUESTONE

It tolerates cold especially well (won't crack); tan and gold streak the blue. Native to the East Coast.

3 BLUE-BROWN QUARTZITE

A tough stone that ranges from charcoal to golden brown. Native to Texas, Minnesota, Utah, and more.

4 IOWA BUFF LIMESTONE

The yellow hue brightens gardens. Choose thicker slabs for more durability. Native to Iowa.

5 RED SUNSET LIMESTONE

Its reddish color suits Southwestern-style gardens. Native to Arizona and Utah.

6 CONCRETE

Pavers formed to mimic flagstone are an affordable alternative.

7 SLATE

One of the highest-density flagstones, it's impermeable to water. Native to the East Coast.

8 FOND DU LAC SILVER

It brings an icy brightness to gardens. Native to Wisconsin.

9 EDEN LIMESTONE

Denser than other limestones, it's good for cold regions and comes in buff, cool gray, and more. Native to Wisconsin.

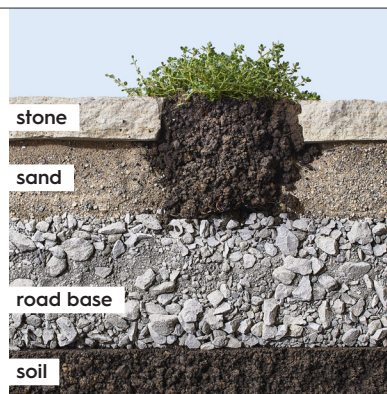
THE LAY-DOWN

Three steps to creating a flagstone path or patio with plants in the gaps.

1 DIG DOWN
Mark boundaries of the desired area, then dig down 4–6 inches. Clear out the soil, rake base smooth, and level area. If desired, install a weed barrier.

2 PLACE STONES
Spread a layer of road base (a crushed stone mix) 2–4 inches deep; compact with a handheld tamper. Top with 1–2 inches of sand, then lay flagstones. Spread sand into gaps.

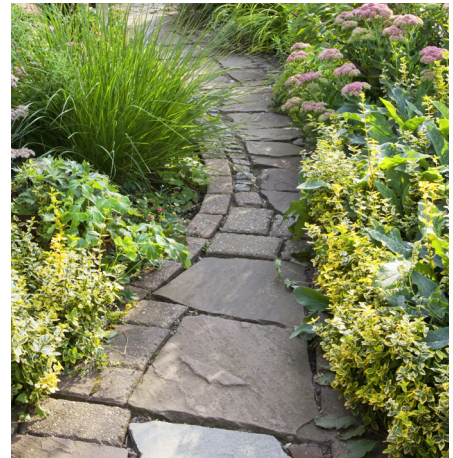
3 ADD PLANTS
Using a thin trowel, dig planting pockets at least 2 inches deep. Tuck a plant plug in each one and backfill with topsoil. Water by hand until plants take root.



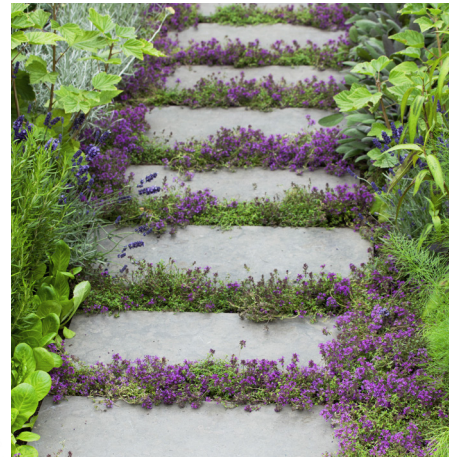
[PLANT PAIRINGS]

MIND THE GAPS

When choosing plants for between flagstones, opt for ones tough enough to spring back after being stepped on and suited to your yard's light exposure. Some favorites:



CASUAL Irregular flagstones, rectangular pavers, and cobblestones come together for an eclectic effect.



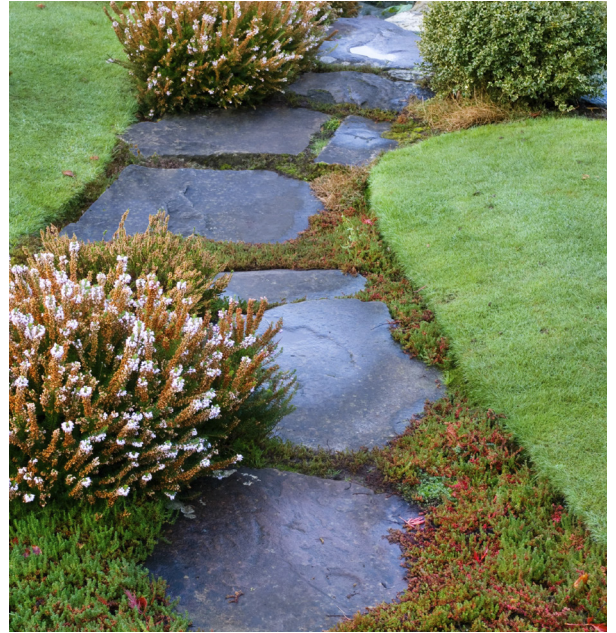
GEOMETRIC Flagstone cut to uniform rectangles rather than the usual irregular shapes gives this path a touch of formality.



MODERN Paired with decomposed granite of a similar tone, flagstone takes on a contemporary look in this yard by NC Designs.



ROMANTIC Woolly thyme softens the straight edges of flagstones in a path Lucas and Lucas Landscape Architecture designed to draw eyes through a row of arbors.



COTTAGE A narrow garden path charms with a series of irregular flagstones. Low-growing sedum in the gaps bridges the space between the path and lawn. ■