

Useful information about patios and paving

Paving stones can be categorised into three main groups; Raven, Textured or Decorative. The principles involved in laying each type are basically the same, although the exact nature of the flag will determine how they may be jointed.

Many types of flagstone are not suitable for vehicular traffic (in case you wish to have a driveway constructed from flags) although some of the better quality products will be able to take traffic when laid on a full concrete bed.

The purpose of a path in landscape design is pretty obvious: a way to get from A to B. However, every path should also be a design feature in its own right, functioning as walkway and as, for example, boarder for a bed, to guide lines of sight, or to complement the aesthetics and atmosphere of the garden overall.

If you have a paving project that you would like us to oversee, then please feel free to contact us, and one of our friendly staff will be able to advise you on the best option for you, and arrange a suitable time for one of our contractors to come and visit. For further inspiration please take a trip to our paving galleries to see what we have to offer.

Raven-effect Paving

Raven-effect is the name given to patio flags manufactured from cast concrete that mimic the appearance of traditional flagstones. There is a vast range available, and an equally massive range of quality to suit. The better quality ranges also come in a wide selection of sizes to enable traditional random layouts to be laid.

Budget flagstones have their uses, but lack the authenticity of higher quality products. The quality products from the big manufacturers tend to have better dyes, higher cement content, and are generally thicker. To emphasise the quality, they usually come in a wider range of sizes, often based on a 150mm module, so pattern formulation is fairly straightforward.

Give some thought to the surface of these flags. Heavily textured raven-effect paving might seem like the ideal aesthetic choice, but the practicality of such a surface can be limited. While some have a reasonably smooth finish, others are exceptionally 'bumpy', making them difficult for those unsteady on their feet or young children in pedal cars, and sometimes making it almost impossible to stop the patio table from rocking!

Textured Paving

Textured flags are those with a surface that has been altered in some way. These include a coarse textured finish, smooth ground or polished types, and exposed aggregate ranges. Most of these types of flags are manufactured by wet-press methods, rather than casting in a mould as the raven and decorative tend to be, and we generally find them to be somewhat stronger.

There is a good range of shapes, sizes and colours available to suit every application. Exposed aggregate flags can look stunning when used sympathetically with the immediate area, and the smooth ground types are our personal favourite. Coarse textured flags very rapidly become a haven for mosses and lichens in untrafficked, shady spots, so this is something to be aware of when making your selection.

Decorative Paving

Decorative s includes all the other flags that don't fit into one of the above categories. There are flags mimicking cobbles, setts, old bricks and even wooden decking and railway sleepers.

Other paving options

We can also do patios and pathway paving in other styles, ranging from pattern imprinted concrete and resin-bonded (please check our driveway sections for more information on these products) to natural, such as Indian sandstone, granite and travertine. We offer a broad range of products and services so that there is something out there for everyone's taste and style.

Sizes and Coverage

There is a massive range of sizes available. The commonest size for patio flags is 450x450x35mm, although smaller and larger examples are available, enabling complex or random-looking patterns to be created. There are also radial units, used to form circles and arcs, along with hexagons, trapezoids and umpteen other geometric shapes.

Patterns and Designs

There are many techniques to make these flags look even more glamorous. They can be combined with paving bricks to create borders or panels of contrast and they are available in a variety of colours. The modular size of the flags and blocks allows almost infinite design possibilities – whether you want something simple, something that mimics an effect you've seen elsewhere, or something straight out of your imagination, we can design and install it for you.

Maintenance

A medium level of maintenance is required once laid. Sweep occasionally to remove dust and detritus. If you find green algae building up on them, it can be removed using a stiff brush or bleach if you feel the need, any residue can then be swept away after a couple of days. This problem with algal build-up seems to particularly affect the coarse-textured type of flag. Using a pressure washer should be a last resort. Mortar pointing seems prone to cracking and vegetation can then take hold, it can be cut out and re-pointed if required. Some of the flags available are better suited to dry jointing.