

HOME HOW-TO

Paving the way

Once installed, a flexible brick application provides quick access to underground utilities, permitting simple reconstruction after any modification or repair work is completed. Without mortar joints, damaged brick pavers are easily replaced.

TO INSTALL

1. Use concrete or natural brick pavers and sand to build and secure the patio or walkway.

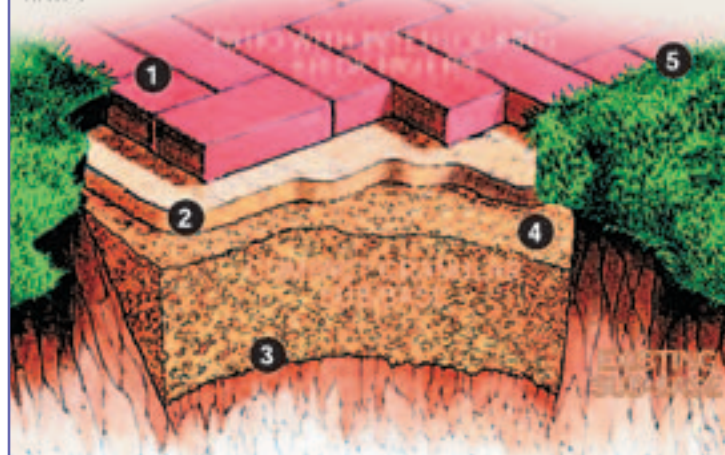
2. Pavers are commonly installed over a substrate of gravel and sand.

3. Excavate to a uniform depth and tamp the soil firm*.

4. Spread 4 to 6 inches of gravel over the area, tamp it firm, then add 1 to 2 inches of sand and tamp it again.

5. Install edging.

*For a uniformly well-packed substrate, rent a vibrating power tamper; for small areas, a hand tamper will suffice.



Copley News Service / Pete Chernak

For more on local gardening, check out our Traverse GardenGuide site for blogs & photos at: www.TraverseGardenGuide.com

Garden party: Tips and more

Did you know that...

We moderns have tinkered with carrots and have grown them in yellow (Pale Sunshine), reddish orange (Big Top) and amazingly, purple — with a yellow core (Purple Dragon). Horticulture has also perfected carrots with smaller or larger cores, mono-colored carrots, and those with red, orange and yellow cores that contrast the outer flesh. Apparently a soup company started it all by wanting a less visible core.

What's new?

Toothed shovels for northern Michigan's rocky soil. The new shovels are edged with sharp teeth forged of high-carbon steel. The fiberglass handle absorbs shock. Obviously, keep them from children for safety. About \$45 at hardware stores or through Gardeners' Supply at www.gardeners.com.

Herb of the month

Oregano
In fact, oregano is the herb of the year. The stronger cousin of marjoram, oregano goes so well with

tomatoes that it is a given in every cuisine that relies heavily on them, such as Italian and Mexican. Tip: Try a pinch in split pea or bean soup. There are several strains of the herb. The best (strongest) is Greek Oregano that is low-growing with fuzzy leaves and white flowers. Happily, oregano is an easy perennial and returns year after year. Purple-flowered common (Italian) oregano has a less intense flavor and is highly invasive — grow it in a sunken pot.

Celebrate!

June 5: World Environment Day. It's hard to keep track of these newer holidays — so spread the word to everyone this day, and mark it yourself with a few earth-, water- and air-friendly acts.

June 14: Flag Day. The day for lots of pots filled with red, white, and blue annuals, with a small Old Glory waving in every pot. Fly Old Glory over the morning glories, too!

June 19: Father's Day Gift ideas: garden tools or maybe a crazy vegetable

bouquet with a man-sized salt shaker.

June is also marked by weddings and graduations. Deck the tables with fruits and flowers or a mix of both.

Old Timer's Garden Lore

"If it be an annual, do not let it make seeds, if it be a perennial, do not let it make leaves."

Translation: If you dead-head annuals and cut back perennials after a strong bloom, they will return the favor with blooming once again.

Reading on the garden bench

Usually known for their gourmet seeds, Ellen and Shepherd Ogden are authors of *The Cook's Garden*, a book for readers yearning to grow and to use the best-tasting vegetable varieties. The Ogdens cover the subject with clear prose and readable charts showing how to grow most of what an ordinary gardener can grow, how to harvest the bounty, and they even offer easy recipes to cook it. (Rodale Press, \$15.)



BY SALLY D. KETCHUM
Local columnist

Short Season

After a careful weeding, lay down red plastic mulch that retains much more warmth than black for tomatoes, eggplants and peppers. An unusual tip: Leave medium-sized stones near your tender plants to warm in the day's sun. The heat they retain will warm the plants in the evening.

Definition: Futility

Roses are red
Violets are blue,
But they don't get around
Like the dandelions do.
—Slim Acres

You are invited to share tips and comments in the *Garden Party*. E-mail Sally D. Ketchum at: ketchum@direcway.com

Picking the right home inspector with proper credentials

BY JAMES M. WOODARD
Copley News Service

As a result of sustained growth in today's real estate industry, the demand for home inspections is also booming. To meet this demand, there has been significant growth in the number of home inspectors - currently about 25,000 nationwide.

However, more might not necessarily mean better. That's because home inspectors generally operate with little government oversight.

"It's difficult to know for sure how many inspectors there are because only 29 states currently have any type of legislation or regulation requirements for home inspectors," said Lisa Gunggoll, a spokeswoman

for the American Society of Home Inspectors, or ASHI.

In California, for example, the law simply prohibits unethical home inspection practices, including repairing properties that home inspectors have inspected in the previous 12 months. And the law encourages courts to consider the code of ethics of established inspection-related associations, including ASHI, when determining whether an inspection meets required standard of care.

There are many highly qualified professionals with a "home inspector" sign on their door, but there are also individuals working inspecting homes with limited background and knowledge in the field. If you are in need of an inspector, be

sure to select one with solid experience and many positive references. It is vital that you personally check those references.

There's little doubt about the value of an unbiased inspection when a home is about to be sold. It provides peace of mind to consumers about to make the biggest investment of their lives. The cost — typically from \$250 to \$500 — is paid by either the home seller or buyer, or split between those parties.

Most real estate brokers

recommend having a home inspected before it is sold. It's the proper and ethical stand to take. But in my conversations with brokers, they tell me they wish inspectors would disappear.

Brokers fear inspection reports that include negative but insignificant comments about the house, often included to show the owner the inspector did his job. Those comments can scuttle a sale that has been in the works for weeks or months.

Some reports include

items under the heading, "needs repair." The noted item might be operating perfectly, but the inspector feels it could soon become inoperative.

It's important to remember that inspectors are not repair specialists or building code enforcers. Inspectors should stick to their roles of determining the condition of property and structures. This includes observations of inoperative systems or appliances and unsafe or hazardous conditions.

Competent inspectors should avoid clear conflicts of interest. They should refrain from offering to personally repair or replace items noted in their reports, or refer an individual or company to do the job.

While most inspection contracts are signed during closing, many sellers are engaging the services of an experienced, professional inspector just before placing their homes on the market. They feel a positive inspection report will enhance the sale.

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