

# Installing a Stone Walkway

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There are many ways to create a garden walkway. Design options abound, from the type of base to use to whether to create casual stepping stones, or a formal organized pattern to deciding whether to use stone edging, lumber, or perhaps no edging at all.

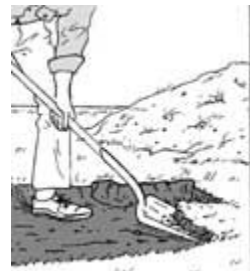
These instructions focus on laying a more traditional, dry pathway, using irregularly shaped natural stones. Using any edging material is optional.

## Planning

As with any major project, you must do some planning in advance. Decide how formal you would like for your path to be and where you want it to lead. Use rope, a garden hose, or stakes and string to mark where you would like your path to go.

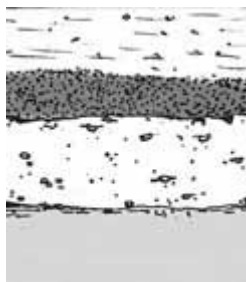
## Preparing the Site

First, you will need to dig a trench about 6 to 7 inches deep, depending on the thickness of your stone material. The standard width for a walkway is two feet per person. So, if you would like to accommodate two people walking side by side, your trench should be four feet across, not accounting for any edging room you will need. The standard width to accommodate a person and objects, such as a wheelbarrow, is 3 feet.



Be aware of drainage issues at the site. Paths leading from structures such as houses and garages should already be sloped away from the foundation. You must be careful to keep a slight slope as you dig, so that moisture will not be encouraged to collect around a foundation. If drainage is a potential problem, you should consult a landscape architect or builder to learn how to address these issues before beginning your walkway.

## Creating the Base



To make a sturdy base for your path, a couple of layers of material are necessary. Fill the trench with 3 inches of small crushed stone. Level the layer as best you can, and then walk over it a few times to pack it down. If you are working on a slope, begin at the low end and work your way up so you keep packing the base materials against each other, rather than encouraging the materials to shift down hill. For larger jobs, you can rent a tamping machine to save time and make sure that the materials are packed in well.

Next, it is a good idea to put landscape fabric over the crushed stone layer. It will act as both a filter for sediment as well as a barrier to weeds. Landscape fabric is available at garden centers and nurseries. Be

sure that it is wide enough to accommodate the full width of your path. If you are using edging, leave room to use it to hold the fabric down at the sides.

Finish off the base by laying an inch of sand or stone dust on top of the landscape fabric, again leveling it off as much as possible, being mindful to continue to keep a slight slope.

### Laying the Path



There are many ways to arrange stones in a path depending on what shapes and sizes you have to work with. It is relatively easy to use a mason's chisel and hammer to shape and trim stones for a better fit. As a general rule, put larger stones on the outside of the path, and save the smaller stones for the inside. Other alternatives include setting stones in an alternating pattern, or laying them into a bed of gravel.

At first, just lay the stones on the sand or stone dust base gently, and arrange several feet the way you want to get your desired look and mood. Then, work the stones into the base more permanently. Use a rubber mallet to tamp them into place.



### Finishing Touches



Once the entire path has been laid, sweep sand or stone dust into the spaces between the stone. Spray the entire path thoroughly and gently with water. This will work to set the dust in place. Since the path will continue to settle as it gets used, you may have to repeat the filling of joints and watering process a couple of times in the earlier months of the path's life.

Many people enjoy the look that plant or grass growth brings to a stone walkway. There are several options for encouraging growth in the joints of your stone path.

See *Beautifying your Stone Pathways*, listed under tips and ideas in the Ideas and Info section of the Luck Stone web site for more details.



**Sources:**

Blomgren, Paige Gilchrist. Making Paths and Walkways: Creative Ideas and Simple Techniques. Lark Books, 1999.

For additional information and other creative ideas, the following sources are also suggested:

Colborn, Nigel. The Garden Floor: From Gravel Gardens to Camomile Lawns. Trafalgar Square Publishing, 2000.

Reed, David. The Art and Craft of Stonescaping. Lark Books, 1998.

***Lindsay suggests that you visit Luck Stone for ideas on how to use natural stone to enhance your home and garden. Each designer showroom is outfitted with numerous displays, color brochures, and an idea center that will help you gather information on how stone can add value to your environment. Or join us for a Do It Yourself Workshop during the spring or fall. Call the Stone Center nearest you for more information.***

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