

## Tips for Creating Your Dream Home by Sara Shragal



### Walk This Way

Looking for that perfect finishing touch for your backyard or garden? The answer could be as simple as adding a beautifully embellished walkway. Not only does this provide great curb appeal to your yard, but it also is the perfect way to showcase your landscaping to visitors.

After investing in lush landscaping and various amenities for your yard, it only makes sense to flaunt your flora with a well-crafted pathway. Creating an effective walkway doesn't have to be complicated, but there are some really valuable design elements you won't want to overlook.

First, your walkway must be functional, so be sure to design your path wide enough for two people to comfortably walk side-by-side. This usually means it should be a minimum of 32" wide. For walkways that provide the main access to your home or backyard, consider a wider path. Just don't get carried away. The wider the path, the more dramatic it will look.

There are also a variety of materials you can use to create your walkway – stone, brick, slate, ground cover, etc – but whatever your choice, be sure to select materials that will blend or contrast with the colors of your home and backyard. For example, your walkways should be constructed from a similar type of material as that used in your patio or deck, so the different elements in your yard won't look out of place. Brick walkways are best complementing a formal landscape design, while stone is a great way to enhance a country-themed landscape. It is difficult to get brick pathways to match with the color of brick on your home, so err on the side of caution and pair light-colored stone that will contrast against the brick on your home.

When choosing stone, your best bet is to select the flattest, largest surface material you can find and easily move. The larger the pieces, the more stable they will be holding up under the demands of a high traffic zone. It's important not to design your walkway so that it passes near or under large trees, as the roots will eventually damage the stone and conversely the stone will damage the tree's delicate roots. And when purchasing materials, be sure to add 5-10% to your order to ensure you'll have sufficient replacement materials for broken or damaged sections.

Pathways created using ground cover or large stepping stones are perfect for directing neighbors through your garden or wooded areas – and also make ideal candidates for designing sweeping curves or winded routes that can provide a guided tour of your flower gardens or rare plants. Meandering paths are also perfect for dramatically transitioning between different areas of your yard. Just don't forget to add some illumination to keep your pathway lit when the sun goes down. Solar lights are a great option to avoid the hassle of wiring and clumsy power chords.

For larger yards – and budgets – it is always fun to add a bench, arbor or gazebo to your walkway at a point of interest or architectural feature. If you're looking to go all out, consider adding a small bridge or water garden to complement the path. For pathways of stepping stones, be sure to fill in the empty spaces between stones with mulch as this will prevent tripping and a much more natural walking experience for areas where the stones don't necessarily meet the strides of walkers.

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