

You can beautify your home with a patio

One of the best ways to beautify your property is to build a patio. It not only enhances property value but adds to your living space, gives the land a "finished" look and enables you to entertain outside.

Patio construction takes time and work, but the project can be completed by the home owner who selects the right paving material and creates a layout that harmonizes with the existing terrain and plants.

The materials most frequently used in patio construction are brick, concrete, flagstone and wooden planks.

Before you get started, research the cost, ease of installation and durability

of each and, uppermost, the "look" you want your yard to have. While cost is always a factor, the aesthetic quality will be most important in the long run.

WHILE CONCRETE is relatively cheap and easy to install, it lacks the diversity that brick offers. Available in many sizes, shapes, textures and colors, brick enables you to create varied patterns and can be installed over terrain that is not perfectly flat, while concrete must be formed, mixed, poured and allowed to cure.

When estimating the quantity of brick needed, you should allow five bricks laid on their flat side.

To calculate your patio's square footage, measure the width and length in feet; then multiply the two figures to get the total.

Some patterns will require you to cut bricks to fit along the patio's border edge; if you'll need to, buy or rent a broad cold chisel for cutting and a power cutter to smooth rough edges.

Bricks are laid over a thick mortar bed, or simply set in place on a gravel sand bed.

WHICHEVER BASE you use, first mark off the area you plan to pave with stakes and strings.

If you are covering a grassy area,

spray the ground with a grass retardant or lay a sheet of polyethylene plastic to deter weed growth.

After the area is cleared, outline the portion you wish to pave with 2 by 4s.

If you use sand as a base, make a two-inch base, level with a screen and then spray the sand until damp.

Begin installing rows of brick and, when the area is finished, pound any bricks that aren't level with the patio with a rubber mallet.

Finish the project by spreading a layer of sand over the bricks and then sweeping diagonally across the paved area to fill in the cracks.

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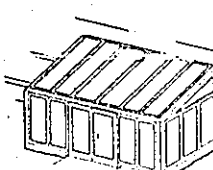
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