

DO-IT-YOURSELF

A woman in a red and yellow jacket is kneeling on a brick patio, planting flowers in a circular garden bed. A young child in a red jacket and dark pants stands nearby, holding a small white dog. The garden bed is filled with pink and yellow flowers. The patio is made of reddish-brown bricks. In the background, there are wooden benches and potted plants.

**PATIOS
&
PATHS**



PATIOS



PATHS

*A little
ambition
and a lot
of muscle
power
will earn
you this
enduring
dry-laid
patio.*

Whether it's in the Land of Oz or your own back yard, there's something magical about a brick path—especially if it leads to a sunny, spacious patio. Don't get me wrong; there's nothing magical about how patios get built. They take loads of energy and muscle power. They require careful planning from the first shovelful of dirt thrown to the last paver laid. But you'll get what you work for: a beautiful, usable, outdoor space that will last a lifetime.

Our patio is “dry-laid,” meaning there's no wet concrete used, just precast concrete pavers laid on a bed of sand. Ours is a large ambitious project with curves, paths and steps. We circled trees, looped around landscaping beds and linked together two decks.

Every patio is different—the one you build may be larger, smaller, squarer or rounder. The good news is, everything you need to know about building *any* dry-laid patio is right here on these 10 pages.

By Spike Carlsen

FIG. A OVERVIEW

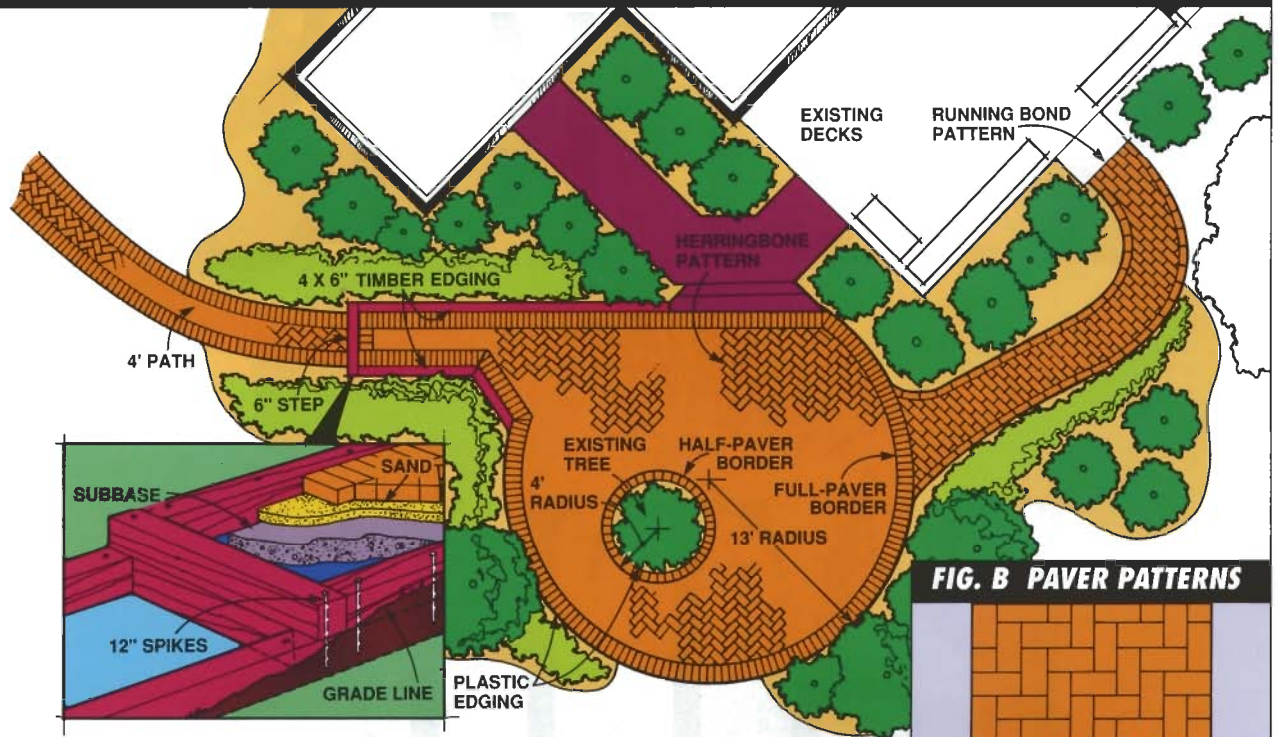
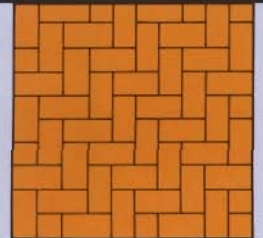


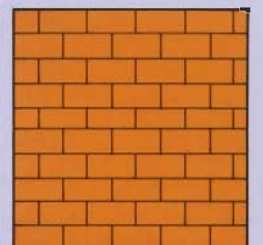
FIG. B PAVER PATTERNS



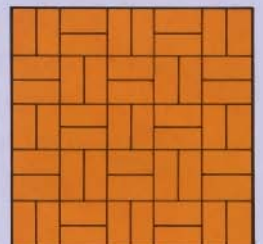
Herringbone



Herringbone at 45°



Running bond



Basketweave

PAVERS: BEAUTIFUL, VERSATILE, MANAGEABLE

One of the beauties of pavers is that together they create a large, durable space, but individually they're lightweight and easy to install. This gives DIYers the permanence of concrete without the special tools, know-how and "hurry-upness" that concrete requires. Plus, pavers have color, shape and pizzazz.

There's no doubt about the durability of concrete pavers. They're often used in streets and industrial parking lots where heavy machinery cracks ordinary concrete slabs. Pavers—small and independent—withstand abuse by flexing, rather than cracking, under pressure. They're ideal for regions that go through freeze/thaw cycles, too; the individual pavers absorb heaving and movement without cracking. And it's a lot easier to repair small areas in a dry-laid patio than with a slab.

Pavers can be used for driveways, sidewalks, patios, garden paths, even porch floors. As long as the underlying gravel and sand base is properly prepared, pavers can be used almost anywhere. In areas where vehicles will travel, the subbase (Fig. C) must be increased to at least 10 in.

The simple rectangular pavers we used can be laid in a variety of patterns (Fig. B). Other paver shapes are avail-

able: squares, zigzags, keyholes, even some that look like fancy floor tile. Shop around at home improvement and landscaping centers and check the Buyers Guide on p. 45 for more information.

THE BEST DESIGN FOR YOU AND YOUR YARD

Whether you're a novice or experienced DIYer, you'll find this project doable and satisfying. You'll be limited more by your energy level and free time than by the skills required.

A well-designed patio must take into account the terrain, landscape and the needs and pocketbook of your family. Not all yards are candidates for a patio. In uneven terrain, a raised deck—which can span hill and dale—might be the best option for outdoor space.

We needed to tie in our patio with existing trees, planting beds and decks. We measured everything and made a small scale drawing of our home and existing landscape on paper (Fig. A). We used a straight, 16-ft. 2x4 with a 4-ft. level on it and a tape measure to get a rough idea of how much our yard sloped (we noted that on our drawing, too). Then we laid tracing paper on top of our scale drawing and doodled a half-dozen patio designs. A consultation with a landscape designer provided us with these helpful tips:

- Patios must have a slight slope (1 in.

for every 4 to 8 ft.) for proper drainage. If you don't provide enough slope, rainwater will settle into low spots, eventually softening and washing out the sand and subbase materials beneath. A flat or poorly sloped patio could even direct water into your basement. Too much slope and you'll feel you're on a listing ship. Bear in mind you can build up low spots with an extra-thick layer of subbase.

■ Ask yourself how you'll be using your

patio. Our expert recommended a minimum of 25 sq. ft. of patio per house occupant. He also added that a patio at least 16 ft. long in one direction is often the most functional. Plan for at least a 6 x 6-ft. area out of any traffic path for a dining table and chairs. Do you need space for a grill? Lounge chairs? A wading pool? Planters? Hopscotch? Sketch these on your tracing paper as you doodle.

■ In small areas, use simple pavers and

patterns (like the running bond shown in Fig. B). In large areas, you can break up the expanse with a variety of patterns or dividing bands.

■ Curves add interest and grace to the patio—but also loads of cutting and extra work.

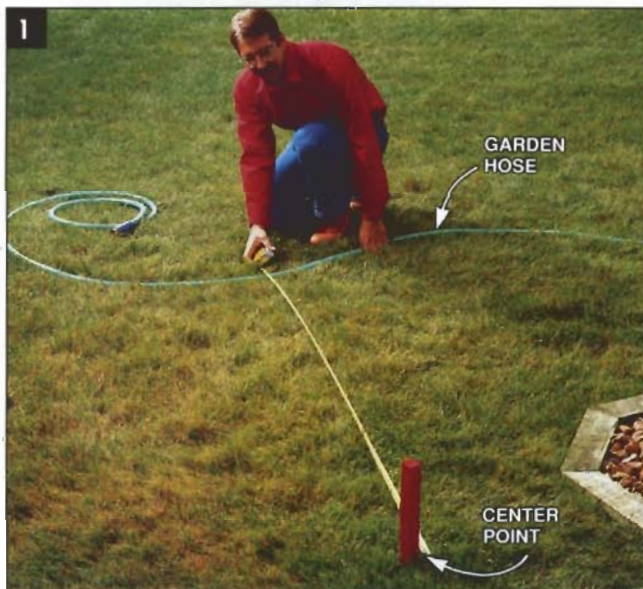
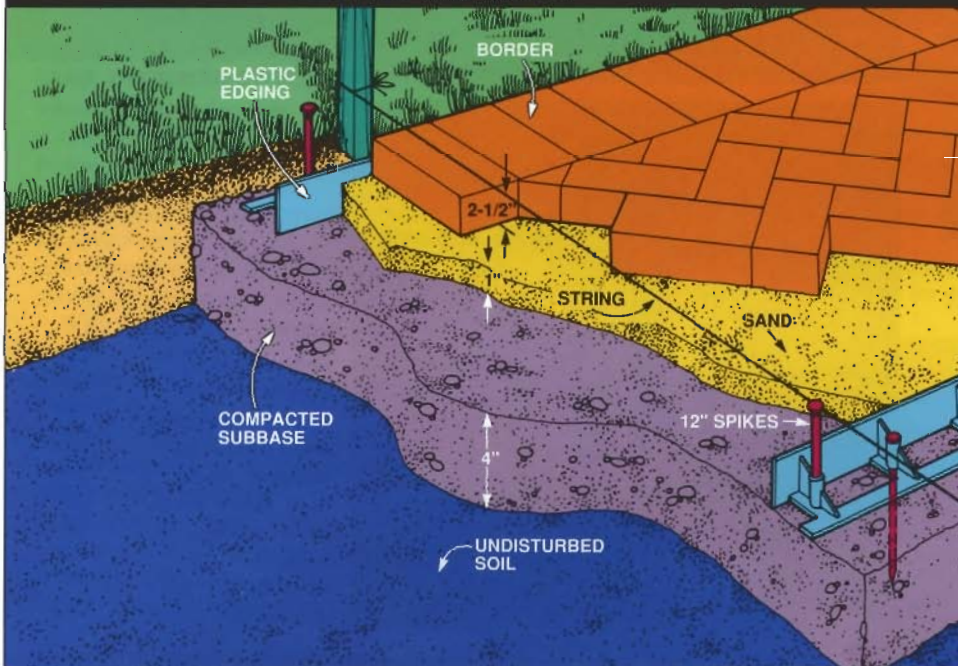
PAVERS, MATERIALS AND TOOLS

We paid 50¢ each (a little over \$2 per sq. ft.) for our 4 x 8-in. pavers. We purchased them from a landscape center, where they supplied us with brochures from the paver manufacturer and gave us lots of installation tips.

When ordering pavers, estimate the square footage of your patio, then add 5 percent. If you have a lot of curves, borders or half pavers—like our patio—order 10 percent extra. This allows for damaged pavers and provides extra ones for future repairs. The Snap Edge plastic edging (see Buyers Guide) cost \$2.25 per ft.; the 8" - 10" spikes to secure it cost 40¢ each.

We used "class 5" crushed limestone for building the subbase. Class 5, a grade of material commonly used for road beds, is widely available. It consists of 3/4-in. rock and smaller particles, which nest together firmly when compacted. When ordering (look under "Sand and Gravel" in the yellow pages), tell the quarry or trucking company you'll be using the material for a patio subbase. If they don't have class 5 limestone they should be able to

FIG. C TIMBER EDGING AND STEP DETAIL



OUTLINE the patio perimeter using a garden hose for curved areas and long 2x4s for straight sections.



REMOVE SOD in an area extending 8 in. beyond the boundaries of the patio. Spray paint indicates the excavation line.

PATIOS & PATHS

offer crushed gravel or another suitable substitute. The class 5 we used cost us around \$100 (7 cubic yards at \$7.50 per yard plus a \$50 delivery charge). One cubic yard of class 5, when placed 4 in. deep, will cover 81 sq. ft. If you need to build up an area, order more.

Coarse sand for leveling and bedding the pavers ran \$15 a cubic yard, plus delivery. One yard of sand will provide a 1-in. base for about 300 sq. ft. of patio. Order a little extra for sweeping into the cracks when you finish (our patio consumed about four 5-gal. buckets of sand for this).

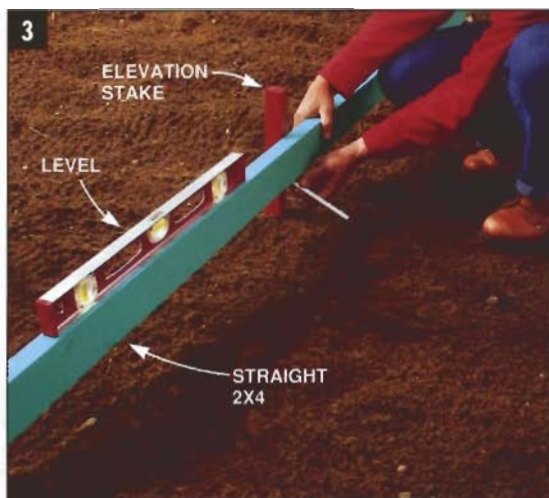
For tools, you'll use everyday hammers, levels and tape measures as well as big, oddball tools like a flat-plate vibrator and a masonry saw that you'll need to rent (\$40 to \$50 each per day). With proper planning, you shouldn't need to rent either tool for more than two whole or half days.

All the materials and rental charges for our project came to \$1,900. That's a lot! But when you consider pros charge between \$6 and \$10 per sq. ft. when they supply and install pavers, you'll see you're saving 1/2 to 2/3 the cost by doing it yourself.

PLANNING AND LAYOUT

The first thing you should think about is where the last paver you lay will wind

Here's the ultimate outdoor project—it's high in sweat equity, doable in small chunks of time, and offers great results.



USE A LEVEL, a 2x4 and stakes to determine the slope of the patio. Slope of 1 in. per 4 to 8 ft. away from house is ideal. Run stakes and a grid of string to mark the top of finished patio, then excavate 7-1/2 in. below strings.



SPREAD CLASS 5 subbase to a depth of 4 in. over entire patio area and 8 in. beyond. Measure down from guide strings to establish uniform height of subbase.



