



Hard-core

Incorporating hardscaping elements into the garden will give your outdoor space a distinct look and feel – by *Trisha Harinath*

Renaldo and YZ Gardens



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ven though hardscaping has been around for a while, many people are still unsure about what it actually entails. The landscape of a garden focuses on many elements, with two of the most important being the softscaping – the plants and flowers in your garden – and the hardscaping, which include structural and functional additions such as benches, pebbles, pots and so forth.

“Some of the many hardscaping elements that you could include in the garden design are natural rocks, pebbles, gravel, flagstone, cobbles, cladding, wooden decking, wooden ornaments, metal arches, trellis work, statues, pots and water features,” says Simon Taylor of Apalis Gardens and Irrigation.

Tersia Engelbrecht, of African Goddess Creations, says that even mosaic art is gaining popularity in terms of

hardscaping. She explains that mosaics can be used for plant pots, bird baths, murals and stepping stones, and will undoubtedly create a sacred space in the garden.

Apart from their aesthetic value, hardscaping elements are also included in a garden design because they can be functional as well. “Hardscaping products can reduce the maintenance of the garden, will aid in drainage, provide privacy, safety and can even drown out noise,” informs Jonathan Newton of Water Plant.

Deborah Hele, of Gardenshop, explains that hardscaping products such as pebbles, gravel, crushed stone and pavers can be used to cut down the use of water in certain areas of the garden. “Gravel and crushed stone are very important when it comes to xeriscaping”, notes Deborah – since xeriscaping is a type of landscaping or gardening

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that requires little, if any, irrigation. When it comes to hardscaping elements, it is advisable to be wary of overcrowding spaces. "There is a fine line between too much of one thing and not enough of the other," states Living Matter's Cheral Kennedy.

She adds that landscapers try to use ratios of halves, thirds and two-fifths, depending on the environment, and the design and structure of the house. "Ratios are not necessarily calculated horizontally on the per-metre aspect, but are also taken into account vertically, in the heights of buildings versus the heights of trees or plants," she says.

Cheral states that getting the ratios correct can be difficult, and since this can make or break the landscape design, getting a good landscaper is essential as he or she will always obtain the right ratios for a particular garden.

With its increase in awareness and popularity, landscape experts agree that the future trends for hardscaping products are exciting. "In my opinion, gardens are fast becoming part of the home with clients opting to create extra 'rooms' in their natural habitat. More attention is being given to water-wise and easy maintenance gardens, especially now that we are moving towards eco-friendly gardening," says Tersia.



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Keeping this in mind, some of the future trends that we can look forward to are more eco-friendly hardscaping products such as screens and trellises made from invader plants like wattle, as well as more modern materials including stainless steel, and so forth, advises Jonathan.

Yochai Zlotnick, of Renaldo and YZ Gardens, also adds that natural-looking cladding, sculptures and seating areas for relaxation are also trends that should be noted. As with all garden elements, in order to get the best for your outdoor space using hardscaping, it is essential to go about making and implementing informed decisions, and there are a few things that you should keep in mind.

"Consult a professional landscaper and use an accurate garden design before purchasing any materi-

als," cautions Yochai. Simon advises home owners that when using gravel or pebbles, it is imperative use a weed cloth under these materials and this will eliminate unsightly weeds growing through the gravel and pebbles. He also suggests concreting the paving stones firmly on the ground.

Finally, Deborah urges home owners to be thorough and proper with their planning. "Sit down and draw rough sketches as this will give you a better perspective on what you want to create. It is also best to work in areas of the garden one at a time," she recommends. 🏡

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