

Yards to Paradise

Stone, the Natural Building and Landscaping Choice

Landscaping Column by Max Phelps



In a time when the world seems to be coming unglued, what could be more simple and more grounded than harvesting, placing, stacking of natural stones? From the humble stone cottages of by-gone years to stone-clad multi-million dollar luxurious homes that we marvel as we see a new one constructed, stone has stood the test of time as a building material. (Think European castles or the Great Pyramids.) Homeowners, or hired professionals, find many uses for stones in the landscape.

A column or short story can never adequately cover a topic this huge, but let's explore rocks and pebbles as they may apply to our homes and landscapes.

Hunting and selecting natural stones can be a mentally relaxing and fulfilling adventure. Just be aware of your physical limitations and avoid injuries. Buying stones from a quarry is an option when it comes to acquisition of stones for building or landscaping. And, purchasing from a business that sells stones and having the rocks delivered requires the least effort on your part but will necessitate spending more money.

Indeed, home building of stone does still take place, but in modern construction most often concrete or cinder blocks are used for the main construction and stones applied as "vener" to cover up the concrete or other underlying materials. The days of building a log cabin with a large supporting stone at each of the four corners and one just outside the door as a step are mostly history except in very remote locations. Faux or 'fake' stone has become the rage as it gets the job of "rocking" a wall completed so much more quickly. Good use of stones adds value to most any property.

Landscape uses of stone are many. From a stone wall for a fence to the stone retaining wall just below a cut in the dirt for building a home or deck or patio, walls of stone are impressive if done properly to stand the test of time (frequently they're not 'retaining' much, but give the appearance anyhow). Paving of cobble stones with dirt or sand between them, or veneer stones on top of concrete using mortar or modern polymer adhesives look and function great as patios and walks—even driveways. Stack stones make good bed edgings. Large boulders can be used as lovely accents in the yard or flower bed.

Rolling land can be flattened using stone retaining walls, and filling dirt for gardening, growing of lawns, and so on. This is called "terracing", and creates useful flattened spaces where once was a slope we couldn't use. Even the flat yard can have stones stacked in a circular fashion creating beds to be filled with soil, thus elevating and changing the look of the flat yard.

So many homes built in the last 50 years are in subdivisions and it's common practice for the builder to sell the topsoil, retaining only enough to grow grass. Using stones to create a raised bed and filling that with good soil is an excellent method of planting trees in the landscape in such a yard. It looks to the casual observer that your stonework was for appearance only, but you know it serves other purposes!

Dry stacked vs. masonry. Sometimes a wall needs to be mortared in. Other times it can be just stacked up rocks. Walls that are dry stacked can often have planting pockets where flowers or vines can be planted and help naturalize the new wall.

Large flat quarried stones make especially nice dry stacked walls. The strength of a boulder that has not been disturbed is obtained by stacking flat, or nearly flat, stones for a wall, for stair steps and for creating the transition to a different elevation. Placing a few long pieces far back into the dirt then filling in tons of dirt on top can anchor many feet of a carefully created dry stack wall of this sort.

Let's not forget that the raised bed can enable growing nice trees and plants where the existing soil, due to being hard, rocky, all sub-soil clay, or perhaps too wet, won't permit plants to live, or at least not allow them to thrive.

Creation of paths, lined ditches, rock-camouflaged culverts, stone benches for seating, man-made rock out-croppings and water features, as well as stone expressions of the whims of the homeowner are all ways stones (rocks if you prefer) are used in the building and adorning of our homes and yards. And creek or river pebbles or even crushed gravels of granite, shale or limestone are quite commonly used in place of ground bark or hardwood mulch around plants, for rustic or seldom traveled paths, or simply to get rid of some grassy areas that are difficult to mow.

As everyone seeks 'instant gratification', perhaps this might be the right time for you oppose the 'going-along-with-the-crowd' mentality and to consider using a building or landscape material as natural, beautiful, useful, time-tested and enduring as real stone.

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Gov. Beshear: 'Due to National Shortage, There Will Not Be Enough Monoclonal Antibody Infusions Anywhere. Get the Vaccine.'

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sept. 20, 2021) – Today, Gov. Andy Beshear said Kentucky administered more than 5,000 monoclonal antibody treatment courses last week, but the state will only receive 4,960 courses this week due to a national shortage. They will be allocated to 79 sites around Kentucky based on backorder requests, current inventory and previous week utilization.

"We will have at least one monoclonal antibody treatment provider in each of our Area Development Districts, but there's not going to be enough anywhere," said Gov. Beshear. "If you're putting off a vaccine to have an infusion, let me tell you, an infusion is much more invasive, and there are not going to be enough of those anywhere in the commonwealth. Get that vaccine."

The Governor said 8,750 COVID-19 cases and 88 COVID-19 deaths were reported in Kentucky since Friday. Three of the Kentuckians who died were in their early twenties.

"While we hope that our weekly case numbers are plateauing, we cannot sustain a plateau at this level with the number of people it would put in the hospital," said Gov. Beshear. "On any given day, we've only got between 90 and 120 total open adult ICU beds in the state. And that's with many outpatient and elective procedures canceled to allow more space in the hospital to be converted to ICU units. This cannot become business as usual."

"This is like a war zone to us. We have staff members experience PTSD, just as a soldier would in the time of war," said Sherrie Mays, MSN, RN, vice president and chief nursing officer at Baptist Health Corbin. "My heart breaks for my staff. I see them out there working every day. They put this hospital and the patients ahead of their families so that our patients can be taken care of."

She added: "If you have the vaccine, your case is going to be milder. You can't think that this is just the flu and you're going to stay home and take care of it. It is COVID, and we have to address it early on."

COVID-19 Case Information Update

Number of people who have received at least one vaccine dose in Kentucky: 2,652,144

Number of people who received at least one vaccine dose since Friday: 13,752

From March 1 to Sept. 15, 87.1% of COVID-19 cases, 92.1% of COVID-19 hospitalizations and 84.6% of COVID-19 deaths in Kentucky have been among those who are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated.

The Governor reported that 59% of all Kentuckians, including those that are too young to be eligible, have gotten at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose; 70% of Kentuckians 12 or older, or 70%, of all eligible Kentuckians, have gotten at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose; and 72% of Kentucky adults have received at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose.

The Governor said Kentucky ranks third among neighboring states for both percentage of residents who are fully vaccinated and percentage who have received at least one dose.

The Governor said Pfizer and BioNTech announced today their vaccine has been shown to be safe and highly effective in young children ages 5 to 11. The companies plan to apply to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) by the end of the month for authorization to administer the vaccine to children in this age group.

Sept. 18, Cases: 3,811, Sept. 18, Deaths: 48,


Sept. 19, Cases: 2,685, Sept. 19, Deaths: 23

New Cases Today: 2,075, New Deaths: 17, Today's Positivity Rate: 12.18%,

Current Hospitalizations: 2,254, Current Intensive Care Admittances: 654

Currently on Ventilators: 452

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