

HOW TO BUILD A DRY-LAID PATIO

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Dry-laid stonework requires no mortar. You don't need special equipment, super strength, or a fat bank account. If you can handle a shovel, wield a hammer, use a level, and lift stones; and if you're eager to spend some time working with your hands outdoors, stonescaping is for you.

PLANNING

In planning your stone patio, there are several important considerations. Make sure the patio will drain properly. Water must run off the surface of the patio to a drain or into the surrounding landscape. Do not plan for water to drain through the patio into the gravel base because water will pond on the paving and this will cause settling problems.

Consider how the patio will be used and what furniture you plan to place on it. Look at access points and traffic patterns to determine connections to pathways or steps. Finally, give some thought to the landscaping and how it will tie together with the patio to make a complete project. A stone patio can be greatly enhanced by nice foliage around the perimeter.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Heavy Hammer
- 3 ft. Level
- Pick and Shovel
- Selected Stone
- Gravel Base Rock (ABC)
- Concrete Sand

HOW MUCH STONE DO I NEED?

Flagstone comes in various sizes and shapes. Let's say that your patio will be 20 ft. x 15 ft. First calculate the area of the patio: $20' \times 15' = 300$ sq. ft. As a general rule, 1 ton of flagstone will cover approximately 90 sq. ft. of area. Thus your calculations indicate that you will need about 3 1/2 tons of stone.

HOW TO START

Lay out the shape of the patio using wooden stakes and string, a garden hose, or spray paint. Place string lines at the desired elevation of the finished patio. Slope the final elevation of the patio approximately 1/4 inch per foot to allow for drainage.

Excavate the patio area to a depth of approximately 6 inches. Place 3"-4" of ABC base rock in the excavation and tamp down firmly. Add roughly 1" of Granite screenings over the ABC and rake out smooth. Now you can begin laying the flagstone.

NO MORTAR

Lay out several pieces of flagstone in an area close to the patio so that you can pick pieces that will fit together well. Start at the highest elevation point and/or next to any vertical structures. Set each stone in place by wiggling and tamping with a rubber mallet until firmly seated in the screenings. Level the stone by adding or taking away screenings beneath it to adjust the height.

Place stones so they fit tightly together for a neat appearance. Pieces can be shaped by chipping or breaking with a hammer or by cutting with a masonry saw. The tighter the fit the better the end result. Finally, fill the joints with screenings or coarse sand. Wet the joints with a hose to settle the material and add more if necessary to fill all the joints to within 1/4 inch of the surface of the patio.

