

All natural

Manufacturers talk about the increasing demand for natural-looking hardscape products

BY VICKY POULSEN

Natural products seem to be all the rage when it comes to hardscape. But since they can't always be used to create the desired look, manufacturers offer synthetic products that can withstand tough weather conditions and look as beautiful as the real thing.

As a result of watching home improvement projects on television and visiting large retail home outlet stores, consumers today are more savvy. They demand innovative design, expert workmanship and quality products. They also look for outdoor products that reflect their lifestyle and the personality of their home.

Many consumers consider their yard a natural extension of their living space, and that probably explains why there's been an explosive growth in patio, pond, gazebo, terrace and deck sales.

We went to product manufacturers and asked them what the hottest items in the hardscape market are today. Here's what they had to say:

Bomanite, Madera, CA
559/673-2411

Chris Stewart, Vice President/Technical Services

Hardscape products: Colored, textured and imprinted architectural concrete paving.

Key trends: "Consumers are looking for textures and colors that highlight patterns and achieve an antiquing effect. Some patterns vary from formal to abstract patterns to non-repetitive stone slate-type material that can also be combined with different textures to create a different look or accent different design areas."

The Bomanite process begins with a concrete mix poured into forms to create a monolithic slab. After initial floating, a dry-shake color hardener is hand cast evenly across the plastic surface of the wet concrete, then uniformly floated into the surface. A second shake of color is applied, then the surface is re-floated.

These pavers from Bomanite achieve an antiquing effect.

When textured tools are going to be used, a release agent is applied across the colored concrete's surface. The next step is

the imprinting phase, then the sealer when the concrete is well-cured."

continued on next page





Versa-Lok's retaining walls provide an attractive, random appearance.

lightweight yet extremely durable; won't rust like steel or rot like wood; impervious to heat and won't crack in the cold; and has the ability to be flexed into many shapes.

"Our telescoping design runs through the entire section of edging, eliminating waste and speeding up the installation process. This connection eliminates the need for separate connector pieces to join sections together. You also don't lose the ability to connect sections together if you cut a section in half. The profile of our landscape edging is symmetrical, which means it cannot be installed upside down."

**Master-Halco,
La Habra, CA**

562/694-5066

Michael Lindsey, Marketing
Manager

Hardscape products: Offers a variety of fence solutions, from chain-link to wood fencing, ornamental iron to vinyl.

Key trends: "We're seeing an accelerated growth in PVC (vinyl) fencing primarily because it's low maintenance. You never have to worry about painting, rotting, warping, termites, corrosion or rust. When you consider the benefits of vinyl, it's a cost-effective solution in the long run. Wood has also peaked in price lately, where the cost for vinyl has de-

creased in recent months as it becomes more mainstream."

Best features: "Ease-of-installation is an important factor to our installers. Our products are designed to be user-friendly and aesthetically-pleasing. A complicated installation can cost a contractor time and money. Our fence systems are engineered to reduce installation mistakes.

"For example, our Monumental Iron Works fence is a modular system made up of many component parts designed to support each other. Using industrial rivets, the constructed panels have the solid look and feel of authentic ornamental iron."

**Permaloc Corp.,
Holland, MI**

800/356-9660

Bob Anderson, Director of
Sales and Marketing

Hardscape products: Aluminum edging.

Key trends: "The addition of elaborate and complex bedding designs using aluminum landscape edging, brick pavers and increased amounts of decorative stone is the hot trend."

Best features: "The vertical grade changes and curvilinear demands incorporated into these new residential designs require the installer to use professional grade products such as

continued from page 47

Best features: "The sealing process prevents moisture penetration and protects the color. Monolithic construction eliminates loose or "turned up" paving materials. Bomanite has greater durability and structural strength of its plain gray counterpart and can take on the color, texture and pattern of other materials."

Curv-Rite, Wayland, MI
800/366-2878

John Mindling, Director of
Sales

Hardscape products: Aluminum landscape edging and paver restraints.

Key trends: "In today's market, there seems to be a movement toward more natural landscapes. Contractors are installing flower beds that have softer lines. Long, sweeping

curves have replaced hard, formal rectangular bed shapes. People also seem to want new landscape installations to look as if they've been in place for years.

We've found that contractors are looking for landscape edging that's easy to install, flexible enough to incorporate curvilinear designs, and strong enough to maintain straight-aways. They also want edging that maintains their bed design edges but doesn't draw attention to itself, and they want it to stand up to abuse from professional maintenance equipment."

Best features: "Curv-Rite was started with the intent of making a safe, easy-to-install landscape edging product. We chose to make the product out of aluminum because of its unique properties. Aluminum is a renewable resource that's

aluminum landscape edging and paver restraints to achieve long-term integrity."

Versa-Lok Retaining Wall Systems, Oakdale, MN
800/770-4525

Matt Singer, National Sales Manager

Hardscape products: Segmental retaining wall systems.

Key trends: "Landscape professionals are seeking more natural-looking products like our weathered Accent segment and Mosaic retaining wall systems which provide an at-

tractive, random appearance. Our weathered concrete units undergo a tumbling process to create rustic, old world character. We carefully blend specific colors to give our products a more natural look. For example, in the midwest, we can dye our block with a brown/tan blend to fit the aesthetic needs of that region. Because they're integrally-colored, units may be split or modified without loss of color. Our concrete SRW units can create beautiful hardscapes such as planters, staircases, columns, free-standing walls, concrete patios and large retaining walls."

Best features: "Our concrete segmental units offer unlimited design capabilities. Solid units are so versatile that curves, corners, steps and columns can be made using only one block. By sawing or splitting solid units, structurally stable corners ranging from 25-degree outside corners to 140-degree inside corners can be built. With all our products, no mortar or concrete footings are required."

Temporary / Seasonal Labor Visas



We Specialize in Work Permits for the:

- Green Industry
- Hotel/Resort
- Golf Courses

Receive work visas for your peak season and have a loyal, productive labor force that you personally choose! Every day you delay shortens the duration of your visa.

Join us in our sixth year of obtaining and maintaining a legal work force. You can trust that our experience and motivation is sincere and our customer service is unbeatable!

Call now for information packet and a quote.

Foley Enterprises

Your labor solution for the millennium and beyond...

Call Free (888) 623 7285

Austin (512) 282 3237

Fax (512) 282 0958

*Other Industries are also eligible for this type of work permit...call us now to find out if your company is eligible

Circle 120