

Artful way to inlay

This landscape contractor combines art and technology to produce great looking patios

BY YOGITA SHARMA

Johnston's Nursery has been in the landscape design and maintenance business since 1928. Yet the task of building a paved patio with an inlay elk head 16 feet by 20 feet proved to be a challenge for owner Corey Johnston Wise, who not only accomplished this task but also seems to have devised a new inlay technique in the process.

Art in the woods

In the spring of 1999, Wise was assigned the task of installing two patios for a customer who owns a cedar-log house in the forest of northwestern Pennsylvania. Nestled in a 30-acre woodland at the base of a steep hill, this house has a large A-frame room at its center. The front and rear windows of this room overlook the two patios on either side of the house.

The customer wanted to keep with the



natural ambience of the log cabin, so Wise presented the idea of creating an elk head silhouette on the lower patio. As work progressed, Johnston's artist created silhouettes of a herd of running deer and a howling wolf for the second patio as well.

Getting to work

For Wise, who had been working with colored pavers for years, this was a large project that offered him an opportunity to do



"something really innovative with color inlay." To create the silhouette, Wise used contrasting colors of Stratford concrete pavers, manufactured by R. I. Lampus Co. of Springdale, PA, using Bayer Corporation's Bayerferrox synthetic iron oxide pigments. Charcoal tone pavers were chosen for the elk head inlay to provide a sharp contrast to the desert blend pavers used for the background.

The elk head patio was dry-laid and took around two weeks to complete. First, a firm patio base was built by placing geotextile over the subsoil, which was then covered with six to eight inches of com-
Wise's elk head design looks painted or etched onto the pavers because the joints are so tight.

pacted aggregates. A one-inch layer of sifted sand was laid over the aggregates before placing three different lengths of interlocking pavers over the entire patio to create a cobblestone effect.

The most cumbersome aspect of the installation was the drawing and cutting of the elk head, which took four days. A computer-generated silhouette was traced onto the patio using a black permanent marker, and then each desert blend paver crossed by the outline was removed and cut using a diamond blade saw. To create the inset section, a corresponding charcoal paver was cut and placed along the outline. The rest of the pavers were later installed in the interior of the silhouette.

The result was an inlay that looks painted or etched onto the pavers. "The joints are so tight," says Wise, "that people can't believe it's an inlay."

The second patio was laid using the same technique. Both patios provide durable and low maintenance pavement that adds to the aesthetic appeal of the house.

The artful elk head patio won second place for concrete pavers in a residential setting at the ICPI National Competition in 2000.

For more information on this technique, contact Johnston's Nursery, Penfield, PA at 814/765-9081 or westwood@penn.com.

COMPANY PROFILE:

Name: Johnston's Nursery
 Owner: Corey Wise Johnston
 2000 revenue: \$1 million
 Full-time employees: 12
 Customer mix: 100% residential
 Service mix: 70% design/build, 30% hortiscaping