

# ROCK SOLID *Solutions*

Summer 2008 Edition



Stonework by Naturiscapes

Cool off with our refreshing "Water Features" issue. Your exciting new Outdoor Escape starts at the Sturgis Landscape Rock Gallery and Outdoor Kitchen Showroom. See great ideas for natural stone inside.



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# Trendy New Spaces

## Defining Spaces...Not Confining Spaces in Outdoor Living

Here in Kansas City, many can remember the 1950's and 1960's where the Tudor home with a side patio and porch was the place for entertaining, playing cards, and visiting with neighbors. Times were much simpler then and socializing was a way of life. Somewhere along the way, we lost the innocence and became a more secluded society. With recent domestic and international events, politics and communication overload... **it's time to return to simplicity!**

To understand this better, we interviewed outdoor living expert and landscaper Brett Berry with Landscape Renderings. Here are some current trends that are taking place. According to Brett, outdoor living has evolved in the last year to truly defined living spaces. This is not to be confused with confined space.



To explain, you must think about the history of Midwestern landscaping. In the 1960's and 1970's, thick hedge rows and shrubs were the way to gain privacy around your patio and porches.

And if that wasn't enough, in the 1980's and 1990's, the trend of tall wooden privacy fences dominated suburbs all across the Midwest. It was like a fortress being built around every home to keep the dog in, and the neighbors out. Our society has become secluded and private. Recently, homeowners have starting saying "enough is enough" and are ready to get back to living...**Outdoor Living**. Here are the results of decades of barricading ourselves in...

**Defined Space:** The newest trend is a **covered patio or deck** that is open on the sides for fresh air (no screens). They have **low-maintenance roofs, ceiling fans and infrared heaters** to gain a few more months of outdoor comfort. The popularity of wood or steel pergolas, dressed up with natural stone, is growing at a fast rate as well. The defining of the outdoor living space is no longer done with large bushes and shrubs, according to Brett. Instead, **simple greenery (not dense) becomes an accent** and does not overwhelm. Plus, natural stone patios and sitting walls help define space without enclosing it, and the sitting walls provide extra seating for guests.

**Clean, modern, low maintenance, living spaces** are in high demand. Brett says that corporate executives who moved in from the coasts, and were used to the entertainment value these living spaces offer, influenced much of this trend. In addition, it's an age group between 35 and 50 that are looking for a **cleaner, simpler, more modern design** that is shaping yards all across the area. But not just the backyard...

**Front yards are also getting the treatment!** Just like back in the 1950's, people are wanting to be more social. So hanging out on the front porch is popular again. Concrete steps, stoops and porches are being covered with eye-appealing natural flagstone. More professionally designed front yards are popping up with beautiful outdoor landscape lighting, courtyard walls, water features, built-in planters, decorative columns and more. Hopefully the days of overgrown shrubs, privacy fences and seclusion are over. Hooray for the return of Outdoor Living!





# Go With the Flow...

Thinking Green by Mark Flynn

So you want a water feature in your yard? Maybe you'd like to read the Sunday paper on your patio with a gentle running waterfall just feet away. Or you might enjoy the sound and look of a rushing waterfall flowing into a stream.

EASY! Alright...not so easy.

**Water features are one of the most relaxing features in the yard** I can think of. However; moving water, containing water, and making water do what you want can be challenging at best. I've seen the most accomplished do-it-yourselfers fail miserably when attempting to do a water feature. To save yourself time, money and frustration, **you should hire a professional who will help with the following steps...**

The first thing to consider is **LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION**. Examine the area of the proposed water feature carefully. If it's in a low spot, water will run from your roof, patio, or driveway and flood your water feature in a heavy rain. Other **troubles occur when the ground shifts** in the winter from our freeze & thaw conditions. This can increase the chance of stone being dislodged off the waterfall and dropping into the pond, or the waterfall completely caving in.

Once you have decided on a location, you need to know how large the feature will be. If you want fish in the feature, to survive over winter, **the deepest part should be at least 36" deep**. The type of liner you use is critical. I've seen many features leak because of cheap liners. The last thing you want is to drain hundreds of gallons of water and then remove several tons of stone because you have a rip or puncture in a cheap rubber liner at the bottom of your pond (believe me I have had to do that myself). *See website for Bend Tarp liner.*

You also need to consider how much water will be in the feature so you **have an adequate pump to move the water**. The volume of water will also dictate what type of skimmer is needed. *Side Note: Water Plants help purify your pond, plus provide a healthy environment and oxygen for your fish friends.*

**The stone you choose to build your water feature is as critical as all the other components combined.** If you plan on running the feature year-around you really need to consider our freeze-thaw environment. **The worst stone to use is our local limestone.** With the winter we just had still fresh in our minds, our local limestone will disintegrate under those conditions. The best stone for a natural looking feature is our **moss boulders and our granite cobbles**. Mixed together they can create a very striking contrast. Use flagstone on your waterfall shelves to enhance the natural look.

Water features are so pleasing with both sight and sound; they are one of the most relaxing features in today's outdoor living environments. *For all your water feature answers and rock solid solutions visit us at Sturgis Materials to see our sample water features for yourself.*



*All 3 photos and stonework in this article are courtesy of Miller Landscape & Nursery, 816-741-0440.*

# Splashing Good Design Using Stone



You could say that the original "Outdoor Living" spaces began around residential pools. They had simple concrete patios surrounding them, and very little landscaping. The pools were the design and were not as beautiful or complex as the ones being built today. *In the last 10 to 15 years, pools have evolved as an essential part of Outdoor Living design.*

**Entertaining in and around water has never been so popular.** Whether it's a breathtaking waterfall or a full-sized pool (or a combination), **natural stone is the preferred choice** for those homeowners who want to make an impression. As entertaining, hosting and cookouts are returning to the forefront

of our social environment, these newly created spaces are becoming more important to homeowners. Parents are preferring to keep their kids at home, and make their backyards a "destination point" for neighbors, family and friends.

**Why is natural stone so popular around pools?** For answers to this question, we consulted with experienced pool expert and landscaper, David Barthell with *Naturescapes*. "Today, designers consider important factors like creating a more natural landscape look and feel. The result can be **peaceful, tranquil and upscale** at the same time. Although natural stone can be more work than pre-fabricated materials, the material can be more durable and can hold its value much longer."

**What trends are taking place in outdoor pools?** *Barthell* "Homeowners are wanting more elaborate pool designs that consider outdoor kitchens, patios, and landscaping. Today's pool design can include **reef-like ledges, underwater benches, and natural stone steps**. Often we are seeing designs with 4'-6' waterfalls (some multi-level) which flow into the side of the pool. Water features are adding to the **sound and motion** of the hardscape with a relaxing environment. The water movement also can help with the pool's circulation if designed properly."

"**The biggest evolution in pool design is the surface and color of the water.** When done right, these two features can create a mirror image of the pool's surrounding landscaping. Therefore, the natural-look of the pool goes one step further with a tree line reflection. Homeowners want **deep, rich blue** color resembling a mountain lake or **sapphire blue** like you see in the Caribbean.



**What design elements do you consider at the earliest stages?** "We try to determine "theme" early on. We look at the land levels, surrounding architecture, the home's color, texture, and more. This will also help determine what flagstone color and texture we will be using. Recent popular styles are **classic, natural, and "lagoon"**. Once these design elements are determined, we start to look at tile used at the water line, pool coping (the edge between the pool and the patio), and the patio flagstone."

Sturgis provides coping solutions which involves custom cutting and special treatments to stone for any purpose. In the case of pools, Sturgis will create the upward curves that you see on pool coping and also the texture.



"Coping with a rough, chiseled edge which is grounded down to a smoother finish is a desired look for many homeowners" says Barthell.

Sometimes you need limestone incorporated into your pool design, or special "bull-nose" cut pieces of stone for safe, rounded edges. For textured stone, you may want a rough-chiseled edge with a smooth top surface.

**Rely on the professionals at Sturgis to provide the details that set your pool or outdoor living area apart from the rest!**

*All 4 photos and stonework in this article are compliments of Naturescapes, 913-579-7305.  
Material Used: Assorted Moss Rock Boulders and Buckskin Flagstone for the pool deck.*

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# Q&A

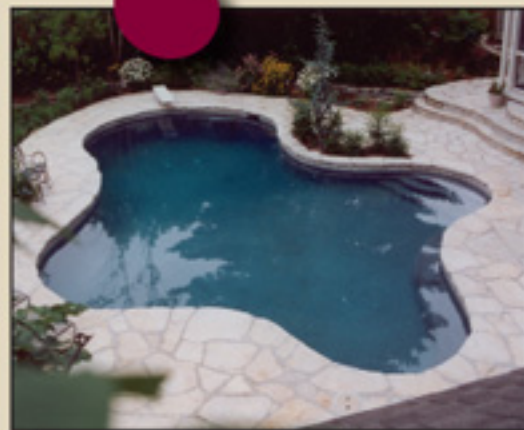
Straight Answers by Chris Straight



## Q: Can I mortar the joints in between my flagstones?

A: If your stone has been installed over a concrete slab, then mortar may be used to fill in the joints. If your walkway or patio has been installed using the gravel/sand base method, then you will not want to put mortar in the joints. The sand/gravel based patio is intended to "float" and will raise and lower with the earth during frost-heave.

**Mortar in these joints will simply crack.** There are some products on the market that are intended to act as a stable filler in these situations, but they are mostly intended for use with brick pavers and have yet to be proven to work well with flagstones. Sand and topsoil mixed together are commonly used for jointing sand/gravel based patios. In addition, our *Gran-I-Path* provides an attractive alternative in between stones.



Unique pool design using Antique Gray Flagstone that is mortared around entire pool deck, coping and stairs.



Geometric patio using Natural Cleft Bluestone - Random Ashlar pattern. Stonework by Urban Oasis, 913-660-4684.

## Q: Should I seal my stone patio to ensure longevity?

A: Contrary to popular belief, sealing natural stone in exterior applications can actually **decrease the lifespan of your patio**. According to the Marble Institute of America, "Generally, topical sealers are not recommended in exterior applications, because they can trap moisture in the stone which may lead to surface deterioration during freeze-thaw cycles." As freeze-thaw is of primary concern in Kansas City's climate, **we rarely recommend sealing stone patios outdoors.**

## Q: I see a beige colored rock being dug up at construction sites and used in landscaping. What kind of stone is this?

A: The stone that is typically seen along the roadsides and native to the Kansas City area is usually Limestone. As with all stones, there are numerous types and not all are suited for building materials. If local limestone freezes before it's allowed to drain its pre-harvest moisture, **it will crumble and crack** in very short order, hastened by the number of freeze-thaw cycles we endure. Caution should be used when building with materials that have not been sourced through standard quarrying methods.



Natural limestone boulders found around Kansas City.

Ask the Expert: e-mail [chris@sturgismaterials.com](mailto:chris@sturgismaterials.com) or call (913)371-7757





# The Cutting Edge

## Ed Walsh, Cut Stone Solutions

If you want the *edge* in building a beautiful *Backyard Escape*, our Cut Stone Division can make your custom upgrades that will enhance your new space.

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# Flagstone Rules for Patios & Pools

## Common Sense Solutions by Marc Lonesk



Flagstone is a flat stone used for paving, primarily in outdoor installations like patios, porches, and walkways. **High quality flagstone is required** around Kansas City due to the numerous freeze-thaw cycles prevalent during our winter seasons.

Desirable traits unique to (poolside) flagstone includes **slip resistance, low heat retention, chemical resistivity, and cost.**

Most flagstones, thanks to Mother Nature, are innately slip resistant. The most resistant are natural cleft quartzites or standard high density sandstones. **Bluestone, Buckskin, and Sonoran Gold are good examples** of slip-resistant flagstones. If you have youngsters or oldsters utilizing your pool you might want to consider this type of flagging.

Flagstones with little heat retention make it nicer on bare feet during 100 degree and sunny days of summer. Limestones such as **Desert Cream, Antique Gray, and Indiana** are good examples of "stay cool" flagstones.

We at Sturgis have never seen a problem with our flagstones due to swimming pool chemicals. However, **if you have dogs** who might urinate on your flagstone, especially during winter, you might want to stay away from limestone flagging.

When buying flagstone the cost per square foot is much more important than the cost per ton. Large, thin stones which absorb very little water are usually the most economical and easy-to-install flagstones. **Crystal Ridge and Rocky Mountain Quartzite** are perfect examples of this type of flagstone. The predominance of straight edge pieces inherent in Crystal Ridge make it our best valued flagstone.



*Beautiful patio with a custom blend of several types of Flagstone. Stonework by Green Expectations, 913-897-8076.*





# ROCK SOLID *Solutions*

*Landscape Rock Gallery &  
Outdoor Kitchen Showroom*

**Landscape Rock Gallery.** Sturgis offers the largest and most unique selection of natural stone in the Midwest. We feature so many different options that we encourage you to enjoy a stroll through the courtyard in order to find the right stone to meet your personal tastes and application needs. Plus, just displaying *pallets* of rock wasn't enough. So Sturgis created a backyard escape in their own backyard. Just go through the showroom and exit outdoors into a world of stone (or walk around back after hours). You can see what types of stone you're attracted to and what the finished product can look like...

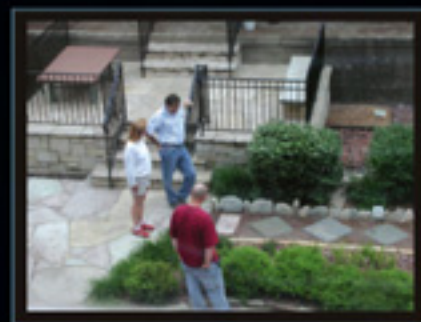


before you start on your project. Our Landscape Rock Gallery was created with you in mind!



**Outdoor Kitchen Showroom.** Our new showroom displays options for beautiful outdoor living areas. See examples of outdoor kitchens using both wood and stone. In addition to the kitchen construction, we also offer custom stone counters and grill tops to complete your project. And if you don't see what you're looking for, our consultants can find a solution!

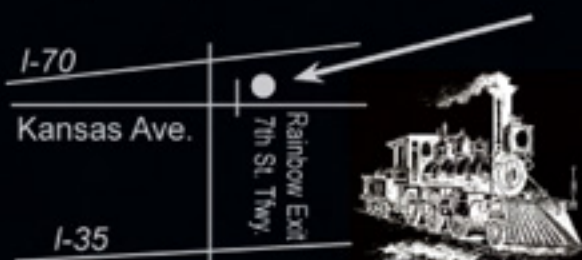
**Education & Support.** You should know that Sturgis offers Rock Solid Solutions on a daily basis. However, when you need one-on-one instruction or advice, we are also here for you. We want to take the time to show you how to get the best results using natural stone.



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