

Pathways

in the Residential Landscape

From meandering and naturalistic to straightforward and formal – pathways link functional elements in a landscape and help define the style and intent of the space itself. In all cases, however, in order to be successfully utilized, a pathway must provide an easy means of circulation to and from the individual destinations within the outdoor living area – from front to back yard or between outdoor kitchen and dining area.

Once optimal circulation has been established, the individual style and personal aesthetics of the homeowner can be integrated into the design plan. Curving, meandering pathways create an informal sensibility, encouraging relaxation and pause. A straight, hardscaped walkway, on the other hand, provides formal and well-defined access suggesting a quickening of the pace. Arbors, ornaments, fountains and even specimen trees and shrubbery can act as signposts, guiding forward or encouraging contemplation. At night, landscape lighting integrated into the garden beds can

provide this same function and subtly and safely link outdoor living spaces.

The choice of material used to create the path and walkway is essential in defining the intentions of the outdoor living area. Brick pavers, natural stepping stone pads, IPE decking, washed pebbles and even sand are just a few of the options available for use in the pathway system. Each will aid and enhance the mood and stylistic effect of the landscape design. A combination of materials can be used to differentiate pathways of primary and secondary importance. However, an overuse of varying materials will create a confusing and dysfunctional effect.

Walkways and pathways are an essential feature in the outdoor living space of every residence. To be considered successful, functionality and aesthetics must be combined to create a unifying element to the overall outdoor design plan.
– *Elaine Sisko*

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