

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Transform Your Yard With New Retaining Walls

(NAPSA)—Whether you're landscaping your new home or searching for a way to spruce up an older property, retaining walls can rejuvenate your yard while increasing your home's value.

Many homeowners use retaining walls for functional and aesthetic reasons. Retaining walls can help reclaim unusable land—such as steep slopes or hills—or add an artistic touch to any yard when used for gardens, patios and terraces.

The newest and most popular retaining wall system is the segmental retaining wall. These walls are composed of stone-like concrete blocks and are available in a variety of attractive shapes, colors and sizes. Less expensive than poured-in-place concrete and more durable than landscape timbers, segmental walls do not require mortar or footings so they are relatively easy to install for do-it-yourselfers.

Choosing a wall system

How do you decide which wall is right for you? Segmental walls can be solid concrete, or hollow in the center. Solid units tend to be more durable, and split easily to make special sizes for curves and corners. On the other hand, hollow units are lighter, but may require you to purchase custom sizes.

You can also choose from systems that use overhanging lips on each block to help placement, or "pinned" systems that use high-strength fiberglass pins to keep the wall straight and structurally sound.

Either way, you'll want to make sure you lay the base course on a properly prepared surface. Most landscape supply stores will be able to provide detailed instructions for your particular application.

Generally, you'll want to select smaller blocks for projects such as tree rings and planters, and larger, heavier blocks for tiers, terraces and taller walls. Your local landscape supply outlet can help you choose the wall that's right for you.



Stylish, new retaining walls can add an artistic touch to any yard.

"Old" is new

The newest trend in segmental retaining walls is the "old" look. To achieve this rustic style, different sized blocks are used to assemble a random pattern, reminiscent of handcrafted, old European stone walls. A good example of this style is the VERSA-LOK Mosaic® Retaining Wall System.

"Today, homeowners are selecting landscaping materials as carefully as they do their indoor furnishings," says Bob Dahm, landscape architect at Villa Landscapes, Oakdale, Minn. "Choosing a random-patterned wall like Mosaic is a style statement—it stands out from the crowd."

To further enhance this fashionable look, some companies, such as VERSA-LOK, offer an additional "weathered" style. These units' rounded, stony edges and uneven, jagged faces, appear to have withstood many years of weather, wear and tear. Weathered walls are particularly popular with owners of older properties and those who use cultured stone to accentuate their homes' exteriors.

So whether you're looking to freshen up your existing landscape or add stylish flair to a new home, modern day retaining walls can make a huge difference in the appearance and functionality of your yard.

For more information on retaining walls, visit the VERSA-LOK Web site at www.versa-lok.com or call 1-800-770-4525.