

Installing Stepping Stones

Pathways and small patios

Stepping stones are versatile and durable elements used to create outdoor play and learning settings. They can be installed linearly to create pathways or enmass to create patios or sensory gardens. Wide stepping stone pathways may double as small patios, especially for young children. Select durable stones and, if possible, a local quarry to represent the local geology and reduce expenses. Stones should be smooth; flat, to avoid trip hazards, and a minimum of 2 inches thick to prevent cracks.

Installing a stepping stone pathway

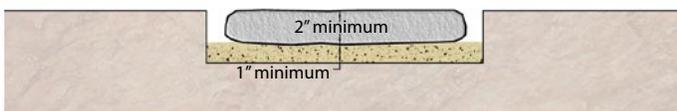
1. Lay out the stones along desired path based on the design. Make sure they are closely spaced (12"-18" on center) so that a child can easily step from one to the next.
2. Use a garden trowel or shovel to cut and mark the soil around the edge of each stone.
3. Remove the stone. Excavate as deep as the stone is thick, plus one inch to allow for the sand base. For example, if the stone is 2 inches thick, excavate 3 inches.



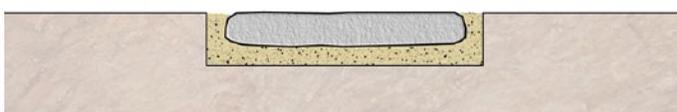
4. Level and compact the existing earth where the stone will be placed.
5. Spread, level and compact 1" of sand to create a stable base (Figure 2).



6. Place the stone back into place. The top of the stone should be flush with the surrounding lawn, mulch, or soil.



7. Fill between existing soil and stepping stone with sand and compact to create an even surface.



8. Spread grass seed or install small plants between stepping stones.

Installing a small patio with stepping stones

Closely space stepping stones in the future patio area (12"-18" on center) and follow steps 2-8 (Figure 3).

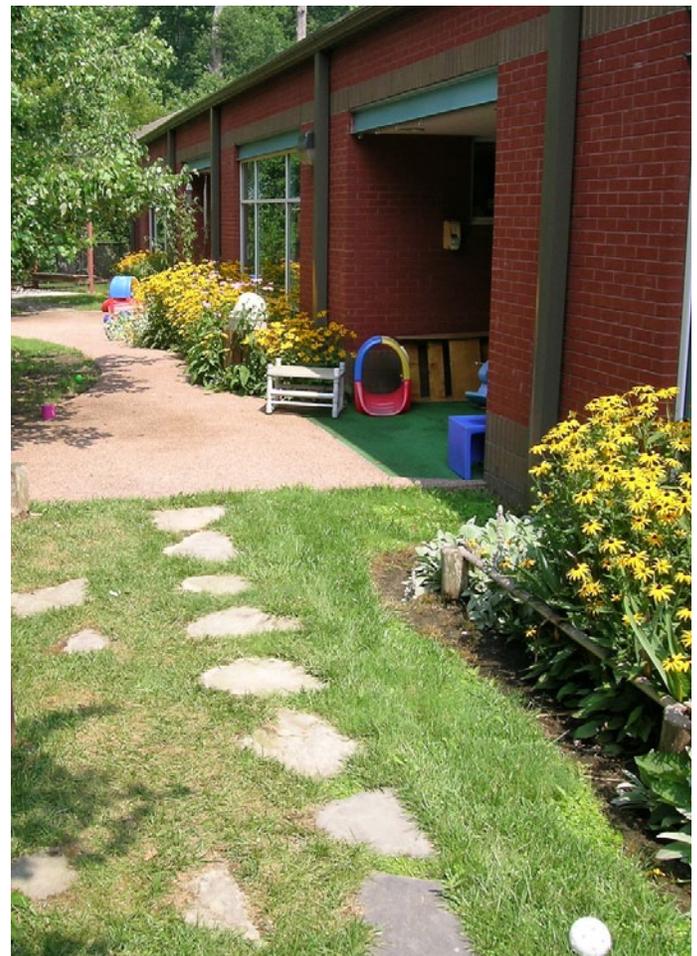


Figure 1 - Stepping stone pathway in an infant outdoor learning environment.



Figure 2 - Checking sand to make sure it is level.



Figure 3 - Flagstone patio connects settings.



Figure 6 - Stepping stone pathway through lawn.



Figure 7 - Sensory plants and colorful stones .



Figure 4 - Stepping stone pathway through garden.



Figure 5 - Exploring a stepping stone pathway.



Figure 8 - Flagstone secondary pathway creates a small patio for bench.

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Natural Learning Initiative | College of Design | North Carolina State University
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