

Garden staycation

One 'upside' of the restrictions resulting from COVID-19 is that we are spending more time at home with our families and venturing into our gardens

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Landscapers have been overwhelmed with bookings to complete larger garden maintenance jobs and garden rebuilds, especially installing or upgrading paving areas. This may have been in the form of extending or replacing block paving driveways, which took over in Ireland in the 1980s from concrete driveways, to creating picturesque modern sleek seating oases.

At the top of many homeowners' wishlists are porcelain tiles and natural stone. But there are thousands of different types of paving materials, shapes, sizes and colours available due to improved manufacturing technology and domestic and imported natural materials.

I am going to introduce you to a small selection of popular paving materials currently available and some of the advantages and disadvantages to each.

Porcelain/ceramic

Porcelain is the "on-trend" paving material due to its modern look, extending the indoor/outdoor living area of our homes. It can be easily cleaned of algae, mould, moss, or spills from the barbecue; even red



Porcelain/ceramic (porcelain is a ceramic, but not all ceramics are porcelain).



There are thousands of different types of paving materials, shapes, sizes and colours available. When buying materials or employing someone, always look for several quotes.

wine won't stain it.

Porcelain has superb strength and is a hard-wearing, fade-resistant and scratch-resistant tile coming in a large range of colours, but is one of the most expensive paving material to purchase and install.

Natural stone flags

Flat slabs of natural stone are a popular paving with "real character" examples including sandstone, granite and limestone with many other types of local and imported stone also available for paving.



Flaking and fading on sandstone.

Some of the most visually attractive paving works can be created using some of our domestic limestone which can include amazing fossils, adding more interest to your tranquil paved area.

One of the downsides of sandstone is that it weathers quickly, resulting in colour fading and flaking. Some customers feel this creates to an attractive "antique" effect, but for others it is a constant battle with the power washer trying to resurrect its initial look.

These paving materials need sealing as some unfortunate spills can be absorbed quickly and will forever furnish evidence of your misadventures.



Fossils on limestone.

Concrete block paving

These paving blocks are a "hard-wearing" mass-produced concrete paver which comes in a range of shapes and colours. This allows for fantastic creativity if you want to pave difficult areas such as meandering paths, circles and elliptical shapes.

The latter is quite difficult and expensive to pave if trying to use a natural stone or porcelain.

The modern rectangular block 200 x 100mm is seen all over the country, usually laid in a herringbone or stretcher bond pattern and is very popular due to its low cost. Its cousin, the tumbled or antique block, can create a natural, sett-like block which can be very attractive around older properties.

It is perceived to be a high maintenance paving material due to weeds grabbing hold of the many sanded joints. But with a little bit of maintenance using a power-washer, it is quickly restored to its original glory.