

Avoid that rookie mistake

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By **BETH YOUNG**

In baseball, they are called “rookie mistakes,” those errors of judgement or style that rookies make while learning the craft.

In landscaping, one of the most common “rookie mistakes” is to focus on a design element that you like without taking into consideration the overall design and style of the garden that you are admiring.

Say, for example, that you want to make a new front walkway that goes from your front door to the sidewalk.

You are walking in your neighborhood and find the paving of your dreams, something that really catches your eye, something you want for your yard.

While it is a great idea to look around for examples of paving that you like, be careful! You may like it so much because it fits perfectly in its setting—but it might look out of place in yours.

Notice the scale of the setting: is it open and expansive? Closed-in and intimate? Some sorts of paving work best in a large-scale setting, such as concrete with brick banding, large natural flagstone (any kind of stone, but flat), or large concrete pavers. If the setting is small-scale, brick, exposed-aggregate concrete, or gravel work best.

What is the width of the path you are admiring? If it is five feet wide and you are planning on a three foot path, that pavement is going to look very different in your yard.

Also notice the style of the home or garden—is it formal, with boxwood edging and geometric patterns? Or more woodsy and naturalistic, with curving paths and flowing shapes? If you have a more formal home, you may want to look at houses with similar character, and observe what pavement they are using. My guess is that, if it “works,” it is brick, cut

flagstone, or concrete with brick banding set in a straight line.

If your home is less traditional, you may opt for the more “casual” material such as natural flagstone, gravel, or curving concrete.

If you observe how a design element works with the scale and style of its setting, you can learn from the pros—and avoid that common rookie mistake. You’ll end up with a lovely garden—and others might just come by and admire your pavement!

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