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The paver color of this driveway is Citrus Cream with a white Hollandstone boarder. The shape and pattern of the driveway is named Key Largo. Photos provided by Enhance Companies

Make a statement

Paver projects on the rise

By MARCIA MATTSON, Special to the Times-Union

Concrete pavers are evolving into an important aesthetic and functional element in many Northeast Florida yards. Pavers' versatility, good looks and ability to provide clean, durable outdoor spaces are enticing many homeowners to choose them over poured concrete products.

Jacksonville-based Enhance Companies has sold brick pavers and performed installation since 1997. It does work ranging from a 10-by-20-foot patio for a couple thousand dollars to a major, \$30,000 project. A range of design styles are available for viewing at the company's Web site, www.enhancecompanies.com.

"Our in-house design team can create a custom design," said Enhance Companies President David Guidi.

Customers can look through books of designs to determine exactly what they want. The company sells brick pavers and supplies, does professional installation and demolition work.

The company also can refer customers to landscape designers for more complex projects, with Enhance Companies performing the installation.

Often, customers have seen something on TV that they like and are seeking advice on how to accomplish it. Enhance Companies is a dealer for several manufacturers in North America. It's capable of doing projects ranging from building grills to creating layered effects with pavers such as seating areas, retaining walls and tiered hardscapes, Guidi said.

"A lot of them really don't know we have these capabilities," Guidi said.

The use of pavers is on the rise partly due to the popularity of creating "outdoor rooms," mostly hardscaped spaces where homeowners and guests can relax on comfortable furnishings and cook meals at outdoor kitchens.

Pavers help accomplish this look, according to Jeffrey A. Wiegert, store manager of the Fleming Island Home Depot.

"With the latest industry trend in 'outdoor living,' people are not only investing their time and money on patio furniture and sun rooms, but also looking to create a more intimate environment in their yards," Wiegert said. "Whereas in the past people would be content to purchase stone to ring trees, now they are taking on more aggressive projects of walls, ponds with waterfalls, and their purchases are in more of a bulk quantity than in years past."

Home Depot sells everything needed to complete a paver project, including stakes, string line, tape measures, levels, leveling sand, tampers, masonry saws and stone.

Guidi said many homeowners also are not interested in spending hours of their free time doing lawn maintenance.

"The workforce in America is working more and more and more, and the last thing they want to do is go home and work more," Guidi said.

The paver market is changing with the demand. The industry recently hosted its first-ever convention in Tennessee, Guidi said. Different grades of pavers are emerging, from standard to premium.

The current hottest look is paver with a tumbled, Old World-effect, Guidi said. The look is achieved by spinning pavers in a machine to break off pieces.

For ideas or an estimate on long-lasting outdoor living areas and quality, low maintenance landscape installation contact Adding Value LLC in Cumming at 770-889-2034. Adding Value also specializes in updating and adding value to property in other significant ways including: door hardware, blinds, shutters, under-decking and more.



This walkway has been enhanced with the Oak Run-colored pavers in the Appian Stone shape and the "T" pattern.



This patio and walkway have been enhanced with the Harvest Blend-colored pavers in the Appian Stone shape and Running Bond pattern

"It gives you that rustic effect," Guidi said.

At Home Depot, some new products that Wiegert said are exciting are Olde Manor retaining stone and Natural Impressions stone-and-cap system produced by Oldcastle.

Many homeowners may not know that pavers would make a stronger driveway than poured concrete, Guidi said. Pavers are rated at 8,000 pounds per square inch, a strength rating considerably higher than the 3,000 psi for poured concrete, he said.

Guidi said his company reinforces the base with a crushed rock layer and a limestone screening.

A driveway made with pavers also can be easily and attractively repaired if a section starts to sag over time, Guidi noted.

The time it takes to complete a project will depend largely on whether the material a customer chooses is in stock or not, Guidi said. Unfortunately, sometimes homeowners want to have a patio created for a particular event, such as a party, and they start the process too close to the event to order the products they prefer. Ordering several weeks in advance allows for the widest flexibility in selecting materials.

Enhance Companies is planning to start offering installation how-to classes and instructional videos to help customers do their own labor. The company has a Jacksonville office and has added a second location in Orange Park. More information is available at the company's Web site.

"Lately, we've seen a lot more do-it-yourselfers," Guidi said, though about 70 percent of customers still want installation service.

Wiegert recommended people contact their neighborhood Home Depot store for details about upcoming how-to workshops on paver installation.

"Every store offers a variety of clinics every weekend," Wiegert said. How-to guides are offered in each store and associates in the stores are knowledgeable about the application of landscape systems, he said. Whether homeowners decide to tackle a project by themselves or pay for professional help, their choices in creating paved outdoor spaces are greater and more attractive than ever.