

THE COMPLETE HOMEOWNERS' GUIDE TO CRUSHED STONE DRIVEWAYS



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THE COMPLETE HOMEOWNERS GUIDE TO CRUSHED STONE DRIVEWAYS



Making the decision to install a crushed stone driveway requires a healthy bit of thought and planning. In fact, creating and maintaining a crushed stone driveway that will meet all of your needs involves a methodical, five-step process. Following these steps will ensure that you make the best choices for surfacing your home's driveway.



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STEP 1 - DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS



As a major part of your home's landscape, your driveway can either add to, or detract from your property's curb appeal and value. Often, your front driveway will be one of the first things that your guests notice about your home, so it is very important that you take the time to visualize exactly how you would like it to look.

Inspiration can be drawn from multiple sources. You might consider driving through a neighborhood where crushed stone driveways are prevalent, and get an idea of the looks that other homeowners have achieved. You will also find numerous examples of beautiful crushed stone driveways online. Finally, local landscaping suppliers and contractors may be able to give you some insight through idea books, or examples of their previous work in constructing crushed stone driveways.

When making decisions about the design of your home's driveway, you will need to give special consideration to its layout. How far back is your home set from the road? If your driveway will need to be longer, you might want to add some curves, or create a winding lane in order to add visual interest. Another way of achieving an elegant look is by edging the driveway with pavers, or breaking up sections of crushed stone with pavers. A shorter driveway may appear more attractive if it is more wide-set, or by installing a crushed stone circular drive, surrounding an island of grass, or a fountain.

Be sure to also think about the color of crushed stone that you would like to construct your driveway with. While some homeowners prefer to surface their driveways with one, consistent shade of gray or white stone, others like a blend of natural colors, as in pea crushed stone. Additional colors can also be incorporated into the driveway through the edging materials that you choose. Pavers, bricks and large stones are common choices for edging.

It is important that you do not overlook any of these considerations when Planning for the appearance of your crushed stone driveway. Not only does this step influence the overall look of your home, but it also plays a significant role in Determining how much stone you will need, which type of stone to utilize and whether or not you will be able to handle the project on your own.



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STEP 2 - DETERMINE HOW MUCH CRUSHED STONE YOU NEED



For obvious reasons, the design of your home's driveway will drastically impact the volume of crushed stone that you will require. In order to determine how much crushed stone to purchase, you will need to carefully measure the area that will need to be filled. For traditional driveways, this will involve the length and width of the space, whereas circular drives will require a measurement of the area's circumference. In addition to this, you will need to decide how deep you would like the layer of crushed stone to be. The standard depth for a crushed stone driveway involves several 4 inch layers.

Because crushed stone is generally sold by the cubic yard, many homeowners find it difficult to calculate their precise needs. Though various "coverage area" calculators can be found on the Internet, it may be in your best interest to work with a landscaping professional. This is especially true in cases where your driveway will feature curves, which can throw off your initial measurements. Having an expert calculate the amount of crushed stone required for your home's driveway can save you a lot of time and hassle.

Another reason to consider working with a landscaper during this step is that the size of crushed stone will also impact how much you will need. Although you may not be sure which size of stone will work best for your driveway, a professional can help you make the best judgment call in terms of appearances and functionality, and will enable you to calculate how much to purchase with more precision.

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STEP 3 - CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

If you're of the opinion that "crushed stone is just crushed stone," think again. Homeowners have several options when it comes to selecting the type of crushed stone that they wish to utilize for their driveways. Depending on where the crushed stone was manufactured, it may be produced from trap rock, sandstone, limestone or granite. These, of course, will all provide you with different color palettes to select from.

One of the most common questions that homeowners have about purchasing crushed stone has to do with selecting the right size stone for their front drives. In looking at the crushed stone inventory available at local quarries and landscaping suppliers, you'll see that the material is available in sizes ranging from as small as 1/4 inch all the way up to 2.5 inches. To complicate matters further, there are also minus sizes available. Unless you are familiar with crushed stone, this can seem quite confusing.

Fortunately, your options can be narrowed down by eliminating sizes that are simply impractical for home driveways. The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) works to classify stones by size through a numbering system. While #2 (2.5 inches in diameter) and #57 (about 3/4 inch to 1 inch) are the most commonly used for driveway

construction, crushed stone that is 3/8 inch and 5/8 inch in diameter are also well-suited to this purpose. If you're not sure which size will work best for your specific needs, it's a good idea to get in touch with a contractor who can help you make the best decision.

While you might think that your driveway will be surfaced with one uniform size of rock, you'll get the best results by utilizing various stone sizes when layering your driveway. The bottom layer should consist of "clean" crushed stone that is larger in size and does not contain any dust particles. This establishes a firm base that will allow for ample drainage. The top layer should be comprised of smaller crushed stone pieces that are blended with coarse dust.

This is where those stones with minus specifications come into play. Whenever you see a minus listed after a stone's size, it is simply an indication that the stone is actually blended with fines. The reason that it's a good idea to install a layer of crushed stone and coarse dust is that it helps to promote stability, and will ensure that the driveway's surface will be properly packed down. Clean crushed stone will tend to separate, shift and create ruts if it is not able to become compacted.



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STEP 4 - THE INSTALLATION PROCESS



Once all other factors have been considered, it's time to make some choices about the actual installation process. Although some seasoned do-it-yourselfers may be up to the task of laying and surfacing their crushed stone driveway themselves, you may find that the project is too large, difficult or tedious to take on. In order to decide, though, it is necessary that you have an understanding of what is required when constructing a crushed stone driveway.

First and foremost, a bed that is approximately 6-12 inches deep must be excavated. While it's certainly possible to do the digging yourself, this is a very time consuming and laborious process. Especially in terms of larger driveways, you'd be best served by utilizing a backhoe, tractor or other equipment.

Once the trench has been cleared out, you will need to go back through and compact the soil. Any roots, stones, weeds, etc. that could impact the levelness of the bed should be cleared away. It is extremely important that you take care to ensure that the base is firm, durable and that the depth is consistent throughout the trench.

Next, a landscaping cloth (or membrane) must be laid down. This material should cover the soil both along the bottom and sides of the trench. The purpose behind this is twofold. First, if too much soil is able to get between the crushed stone, the driveway may break down prematurely. Secondly, the membrane works to prevent weeds and roots from growing up from the soil and compromising the integrity of the drive.

From here, you will introduce a 4-inch layer of larger, clean stones. This will strengthen the base of your crushed stone driveway, will prevent excess runoff and will promote adequate drainage. Again, this layer will need to be evenly applied and flattened for consistency.

A second 4-inch layer of crushed stone will need to be applied on top of the larger stones. These pieces will need to be slightly smaller than the base material. Finally, you will add your minus-specified crushed stone, which contains fines and coarse dust.



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STEP 4 (cont.) - THE INSTALLATION PROCESS

In order to contain the crushed stone to your driveway area, an edging material will need to be added around the perimeter of the drive. Not only will this keep the crushed stone pieces in place, but it will also add to the overall aesthetic of your driveway.

Of course, none of these steps will be possible without having the crushed stone materials on-site. In order to obtain the stone, you will either be required to pick the material up on your own and haul it back to your home, which may take several trips, or you will need to have it bulk delivered.

If all of this sounds too overwhelming, or if you are in doubt of your ability to properly carry out these functions, it's a good idea to seek out a professional contractor to handle the job for you. Doing so will eliminate any need on your end to perform any manual labor, worry about getting the crushed stone from Point A to Point B or how to obtain the necessary tools and equipment to excavate and level both the bed and each layer of the driveway.

It's also a good idea to consider working with a contractor if you are hoping to install a crushed stone driveway that winds or curves. Digging a base trench for a path with such a unique shape may prove challenging, especially when it comes to ensuring that the driveway is perfectly even. Professionals have the experience, skills and tools that are needed to ensure that your driveway is completely with precision.



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STEP 5 - CONSIDER ANY NECESSARY MAINTENANCE AND/OR REPAIR



In order for any driveway to be long lasting, it must be properly cared for and maintained. This involves anticipating which types of problems your driveway may experience, and taking measures to prevent them from happening. The good news is that crushed stone driveways are actually relatively low maintenance.

The biggest thing to remember with regards to the maintenance of a crushed stone driveway is that a new layer of stone should be applied to the path each year. With the passage of time, it's inevitable that some stones will be washed away by rain, moved around or pushed out into the street at your driveway's base. In order to maintain proper traction, strength, and an attractive surface, you'll want to pack a layer of small crushed stone and fines on top of your driveway on an annual basis.

The best time to do this is usually in the spring. After shoveling or plowing snow away from your drive, you can expect that your driveway may need a little bit of a facelift. While the top layer of crushed stone may have been impacted by winter weather and maintenance, though, the bottom layer should remain firmly intact.

The simple task of re-applying a new layer of small crushed stone to the top of your driveway can also help you to avoid ruts and potholes. The more even, level and compacted this top layer is, the less likely it is that frequent traffic or rainwater will shift the stones and create problems like these.

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STEP 5 (cont.) - CONSIDER ANY NECESSARY MAINTENANCE AND/OR REPAIR

In the event that your driveway does sustain some damages, however, it's a good idea to have a plan for repairing those issues before they occur. Keeping a small store of extra top-layer crushed stone on hand at all times, for example, will make it much easier for you to patch up any problem areas quickly, and without the hassle of having to visit your crushed stone supplier.

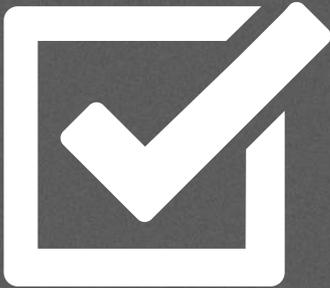
Some homeowners make the mistake of attempting to create a "quick fix" for ruts and potholes in a crushed stone driveway. Using a shovel, they might simply even out the crushed stone by taking stone from nearby areas of the driveway in order to fill in the hole. All this does, though, is create another area of the driveway that is weak or uneven. Whenever such a problem develops, it is imperative that you take the time to apply new crushed stone to the area.

It's also a good idea to just keep an eye on the condition of your crushed stone driveway in general. Especially in cases where you have made the decision to lay the driveway yourself, it's smart to watch out for any issues that are related to water. Problems like washouts, brims, ruts and excessive storm water runoff are all indications that the driveway has some serious drainage issues. Usually, the problem can be traced back to an inadequate supply of large, clean crushed stone at the base of the bed.

In this case, you may need to excavate the driveway and incorporate more stone. In rare situations like these, it's generally in your best interest to hire a contractor who can utilize heavy equipment to repair the issue with precision and ease.



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WHERE TO PURCHASE CRUSHED STONE FOR YOUR DRIVEWAY

Never underestimate the importance of selecting the right supplier for purchasing crushed stone materials for your driveway. It is often a homeowner's first instinct to visit a big box retailer like Home Depot or Lowes. These stores are generally convenient, and a large brand name instills confidence and trust. You may be surprised to learn, then, that suppliers like these are not your best options.

The smartest way to buy crushed stone is by going directly to the source. First, a crushed stone manufacturer will have a larger available supply of crushed stone for you to select from. This will provide you with more options in terms of stone size, color, type, etc. You will also enjoy the convenience of being able to buy all of the materials that you need in one location. Big stores may have some of the most commonly used stones in stock, but may not have exactly what you're looking for.



The biggest benefit of buying from a crushed stone manufacturer, though, is the price. Large retailers do not produce their own products, meaning that they are only re-selling stones that were purchased elsewhere. By acting as the "middle man," these retailers must then charge customers more than what the stone may actually be worth. Purchasing direct ensures that you will get the most competitive rates available. And because the manufacturer will take pride in their work, you can rest assured that you'll enjoy the most value for your dollar.



FINAL THOUGHTS

ON CRUSHED STONE DRIVEWAYS



When carefully planned out, and constructed with skill and precision, a crushed stone driveway can significantly add to your home's beauty and value. By following this user-friendly guide to installing a crushed stone drive, and seeking out the best materials possible, you'll be able to enjoy it in the many years ahead.

As a leading manufacturer of crushed stone in New Jersey, the experts at Braen Stone are happy to provide you with answers to any other questions about your home's driveway that you may have. You'll always find high-quality crushed stone in all sizes available at fair prices, for bulk delivery or pickup at Braen Stone.

