

Wave Outdoors Landscape + Design provides landscape design and construction in Mount Prospect. Use these planning questions to prepare a project conversation.

Planning considerations

This guide looks closely at the classic workhorses, how they perform, and when to choose one pattern over another. It also covers practical details that decide whether a project stays tight across freeze-thaw cycles, heavy foot traffic, and daily use. Whether you are shaping a modest front yard landscaping refresh or a full property landscaping transformation with pool deck pavers, retaining walls, and outdoor kitchen installation, the right paver pattern anchors everything else.

What patterns actually do in the field

Pattern choice is more than a fashion decision. Interlocking pavers rely on side-to-side confinement to resist movement. The angle and direction of joints, combined with base preparation and edge restraint, determine performance. On driveways and high-turn zones, for example, patterns that create more interlock at varied angles handle torsion without spreading. That is why you will see herringbone on historic streets all over Europe, still intact under constant use.

In backyard landscaping and outdoor living spaces, pattern also frames use zones. You can subtly define a dining area, a fire pit area, or a path to the garden with a shift in laying style, a change in running direction, or a narrow soldier course. In commercial landscaping, pattern modulation helps with wayfinding and ADA considerations by adding visual cues without clutter.

Herringbone: the workhorse with rhythm

Herringbone gets recommended so often for paver driveways and paver pathways because it performs. Units meet at consistent angles, allowing adjacent pavers to grab each other as loads try to shift them. If you have a concrete driveway in mind, you can still mimic the aesthetic with stamped overlays, but true interlocking pavers in a herringbone layout handle freeze-thaw and wheel loads better, especially with proper compaction before paver installation.

Basketweave: classic charm with a calm surface

Basketweave suits brick patio and brick walkway projects like a well-tailored jacket. Pairs of pavers alternate orientations, creating a woven look. It is inherently rectilinear and evokes historic courtyards, garden walls, and masonry walls without the weight. With modern concrete pavers in two proportional sizes, you can upgrade the traditional version into something bolder and still keep that familiar comfort.

Basketweave handles foot traffic well. For driveways, it can work, but a tighter herringbone will resist shear forces better. In small spaces like townhome courtyards or front yard landscaping entries, basketweave scales gracefully, especially with a soldier course to lock the edges. It pairs beautifully with garden bed installation, raised garden beds, and soft plantings such as ornamental grasses and perennial gardens. The simple geometry lets the plants do the talking.

Modular ashlar: random that is not random

Ashlar patterns blend multiple sizes in repeating modules. They read as organic and random at a glance, yet they come from a set of predictable ratios that repeat across the surface. This is the go-to for natural stone walls and for patios meant to echo flagstone without the labor of custom scribe cuts. With concrete pavers, manufacturers publish laying guides that ensure joint lines do not stack.

One caution: installers must be disciplined with the pattern modules. If someone starts “making it up,” joints can stack and telegraph across the patio, weakening the interlock and drawing the eye in a bad way. Good foremen keep a printed module diagram at hand, and that simple habit pays off.

Circle kits, fans, and arcs: focal geometry with purpose

Circular kits and fan patterns produce instant focal points. They shine in a courtyard, at the end of a paver walkway, or under a pavilion construction. With brick or small-format pavers, fan patterns nod to European streetscapes. With larger concrete units, full circles work well for a fire pit area or an outdoor dining space.

For driveways, a fan at the apron can soften a wide frontage and frame an entrance design. Just ensure the field pattern ties in cleanly. A break band with a soldier course helps transition between motifs without looking forced.

Borders, bands, and directional cues

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Borders do more than tidy edges. They manage sightlines, contain bedding sand, and allow thermal expansion if you are using slab-like materials. A single soldier course (units laid perpendicular to the edge) is common. A double sailor course (units parallel to the edge) fattens the frame and can carry a contrasting color to tie in house trim or landscape walls.

Bands and inlays guide movement and define zones. On a larger patio design, a perpendicular band can visually divide the cooking zone from the lounge, a trick that often costs only a few extra linear feet of a contrasting paver. In commercial landscaping, bands help with crosswalk visibility and reinforce the route without signage.

Choose colors with restraint. One strong contrast plus a body color usually looks refined. Three or more colors can work in playful family-friendly landscape design, but they require careful balance with plant massing and outdoor lighting.

Material matters: brick, concrete, and stone

Clay brick patio and brick driveway installations have unrivaled color fastness. True through-body color means decades of UV exposure do not wash them out. Brick sizes are smaller, which increases joint count and flexibility on curves. Basketweave and running bond feel natural with brick, and fans are authentic. For freeze-thaw durability in hardscaping, clay brick excels, but it requires a well-compacted base and permeable bedding to avoid heaving.

Concrete pavers offer more sizes, textures, and integrated systems, including permeable pavers for water management. Modern interlocking pavers use spacer nibs to maintain joint width, critical for polymeric sand performance. Herringbone and ashlar thrive with concrete units. Permeable paver benefits include reduced runoff, recharge of groundwater, and fewer puddles after storms. In driveway design with municipal requirements, permeable systems can help satisfy stormwater codes.

Natural stone patios, such as flagstone patios or calibrated quartzite and limestone, bring organic variation. Patterns lean toward ashlar or running bond with rectangular modules. True random flagstone reads romantic

but costs more in labor due to scribing and fitting. If you want that look with a friendlier budget, use a tumbled concrete ashlar in earth tones, then bring authenticity through stone walls, a masonry fireplace, or boulder accents.

Matching pattern to place

In front yard landscaping, pattern can cue guests. A wider running bond path with crosswise joints feels welcoming. A small border band at the street edge breaks the visual fall from asphalt to yard. On corner lots, a fan or arc near the walk can soften hard angles and create a pocket for seasonal flower rotation plans.

Using pattern transitions without visual noise

Blending patterns works best when each one has a job. A herringbone field for strength, a running bond for a dining zone, and a soldier course as a seam. Limit the number of changes. Two patterns plus a border system typically feel composed. Align transitions with architectural elements: the edge of a pergola installation, the face of seating walls, or the line of a garden fountain. That alignment makes the layout feel as if it grew there, not as if it was overlaid.

Integrating walls, steps, and pattern

If your site needs structural walls, work with segmental walls and wall systems that coordinate with the paver line. Manufacturers engineer compatible block walls and capstones so the connection details look seamless. Where natural stone walls are the choice, a modular ashlar paver pattern typically complements the random ashlar face of the stone without competing.

Maintenance and longevity: pattern and practicality

Sealed or not sealed, polymeric sand or joint stone, permeable or standard installation, these choices influence maintenance. Patterns with more joints, like herringbone, have more lines to sand and sweep, yet they resist movement better over time. Permeable paver joints use a clear stone infill that will need periodic top-off, especially after the first year as the system settles and migrates a bit under rainfall. A light rinse and a top dressing every few seasons keep joints flush.

For properties with lots of trees, leaf litter and pollen can bind to joints. A gentle blower and occasional low-pressure wash prevent build-up. Avoid high-pressure washing that scours sand from joints. Resanding is straightforward, but repeated aggressive washing accelerates the cycle. In snow climates, use plastic shovels and non-corrosive ice melt products to avoid etching. Proper edge restraint and consistent base prep pay dividends here. A well-installed patio will not pop or heave under normal winter care.

Pattern, planting, and the whole composition

Hardscape is the stage, planting is the cast. Pattern choices influence plant selection and placement. A calmer stack bond or running bond supports bolder, textural planting, such as native plants and pollinator friendly garden design. A lively herringbone or ashlar often pairs well with evergreen and perennial garden planning that repeats shapes and keeps color palettes tight.

A quick field checklist for choosing and executing your pattern

Match pattern to use. Herringbone for high loads, ashlar or running bond for patios, basketweave for classic charm. Respect scale. Small units for tight curves and small spaces, larger modules for expansive patios and pool decks. Plan borders early. Soldier or sailor courses stabilize edges and frame zones. Align with architecture. Let doors, columns, and walls decide pattern starts and transitions. Build the base right. Consistent compaction, proper drainage, and firm edge restraint beat any pattern mistake.

Budget, scheduling, and realistic expectations

Project timelines depend on site prep. A laser-true base takes time, but it shortens the punch-list at the end. Phased landscape project planning helps if you need to stage work across seasons. For example, get the hardscape in first, then come back for planting design, outdoor lighting, and irrigation installation when weather and budget align. If you are blending landscape construction with a pool, coordinate coping elevations early so pattern and slopes work with the pool deck safety ideas and cover mechanics.

When to call in pros

DIY paver installation can be rewarding, but certain sites and patterns demand pro-level tools and judgment. Sloped yards that need drainage installation and retaining wall design, driveways with turning loads, and complex pattern transitions near masonry fireplace footings or outdoor kitchen structural design benefit from experienced landscape contractors. A full service landscaping firm with integrated hardscape design, 3D landscape rendering services, and field crews that handle both landscape improvements and hardscape construction streamlines decision-making and reduces change orders.

During a landscape consultation, ask to see examples of the exact pattern you are considering in similar applications, not just catalog photos. Walk completed patios, check joint tightness, look at cuts around posts and drains, and ask about freeze-thaw performance after several winters. Good contractors are proud to show that work.

Bringing it all together

Patterns give shape to how you move and gather outside. They solve structural problems quietly, under your feet, while setting a style that can hold for decades. Choose herringbone where strength and rhythm matter, basketweave for tradition, running bond or stack bond for clarity and calm, ashlar for a natural cadence, and circles or fans when you want a focal moment. Tie patterns to the architecture, defend them with proper base and edge restraint, and let planting complete the story. Whether you are planning a compact stone walkway through a shade garden or a full-blown outdoor living space with pergola installation, fire pit installation, and poolside landscaping, the right paver pattern makes the space feel inevitable, the way good design should.

Proposal review

Read the proposal beside the project brief. Check which parts of the landscape are included and which choices still need agreement. Ask how changes to one area affect adjacent surfaces, planting or access. Save each clarification with the version of the proposal it changes so the next conversation uses the current scope.