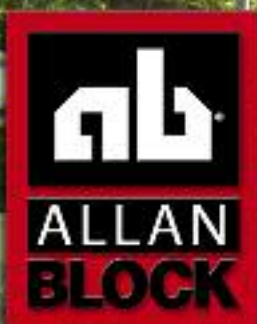
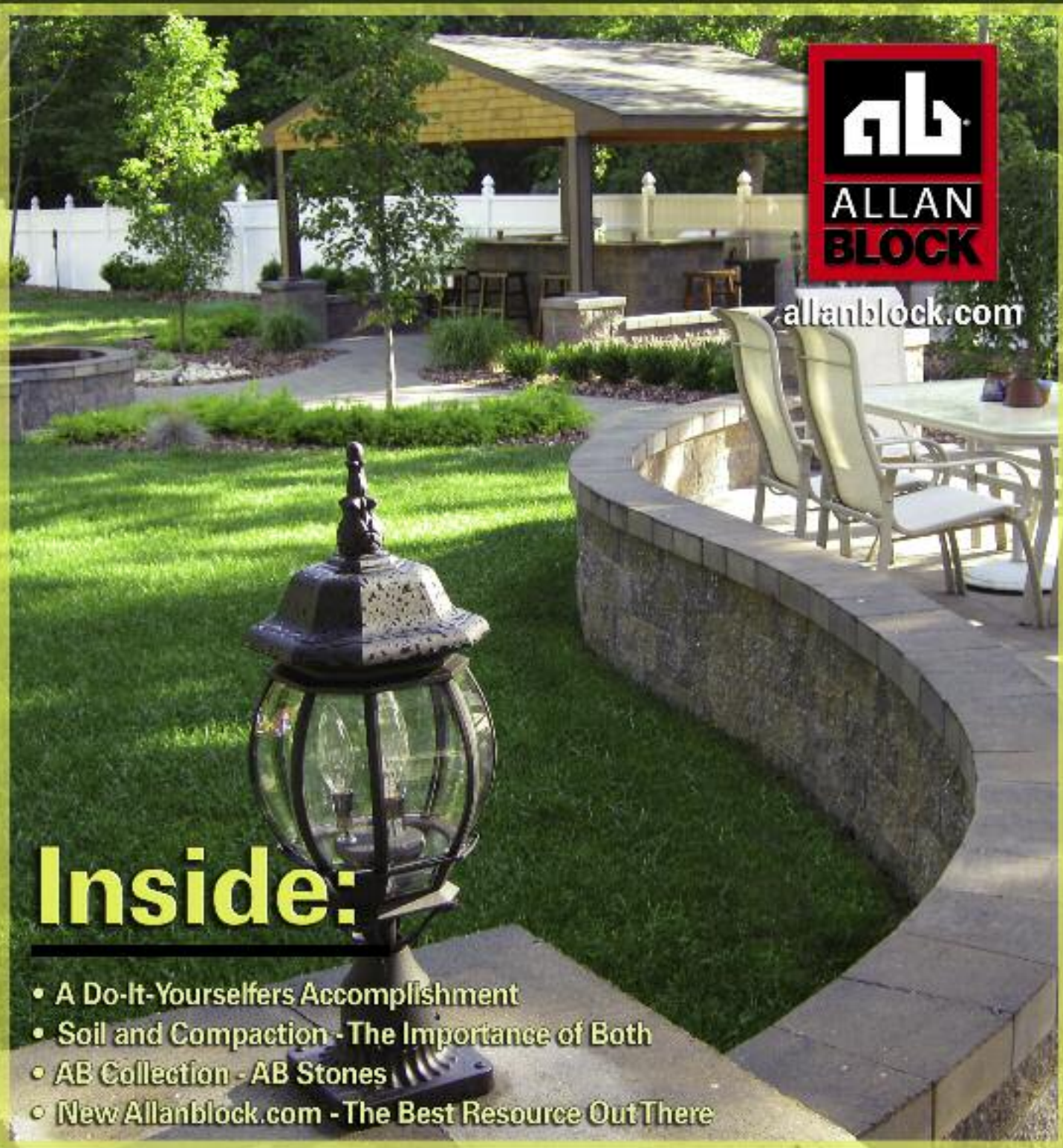


# ALLAN BLOCK LANDSCAPES

Newsletter for the Landscape Professional

Issue 27



[allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com)

## Inside:

- A Do-It-Yourselfers Accomplishment
- Soil and Compaction - The Importance of Both
- AB Collection - AB Stones
- New Allanblock.com - The Best Resource Out There



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## *Impressive Results with Allan Block*

Bobby and Kristy Loff are Do-it-Yourselfers to the extreme. Purchasing a home in New Jersey back in 2003, they spent 6 years completely redoing every aspect from top to bottom to get it just the way they wanted.

When it came time to tackle their landscaping, they started researching on the internet and magazines and determined what they wanted - paver patio, retaining walls and beautiful plantings to accent the space - a nice comfortable back yard area. Having never installed pavers or retaining walls, they contacted Clayton Block and Don Clayton for more information and to determine if this was a project they could tackle or would need to hire a contractor.

Don went over all of the product options available to them including the Allan Block website and all of the How-To Weekend Projects. Bobby continued his research, watched all of Allan Block's How-To videos and then changed their original design entirely after seeing all of the options that would create their backyard space into new "Outdoor Rooms". They were excited.



Entertaining family and friends was an important element they considered when redesigning their space. With large extended families on both sides, they needed an area that could easily accommodate a large group, and still feel intimate.

Armed with How-To sheets in hand, notes from watching the videos and some of their friends, they began their backyard makeover. The patio and fire pit were finished the summer of 2009. In the spring of 2010 they added one more item to their creation, an outdoor bar and grilling station. They created the bar using AB Courtyard and finished it with a granite countertop, built-in sink, ice maker, and a beverage cooler. AB Courtyard pillars were built around wood posts holding up the roof to complete the outdoor bar. To accommodate more guest seating they built AB Courtyard walls between the pillars.



The Loff's love their new outdoor space and without the knowledge they learned from [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com) and the knowledgeable sales staff at their local dealer, they could not have imagined and created their very own paradise.

# Proper Soils and Compaction = Build

*Building an Allan Block wall is not rocket science, but does take some knowledge about the materials you are working with. As with most things, the better the materials are, the easier the entire job is.*

## Lets Start with Soils

Understanding the properties and characteristics of soils is key to building better walls. Different soil types will dictate the amount of time needed for compaction, the amount of reinforcement required, and potentially the cost of the wall. Granular soils are better to build with than clay soils. Sand and gravel will compact better, drain better, and often will need less reinforcement. With many job sites choosing your soil is not an option; it is what makes up your site, but knowing what needs to be done with the type of soil you have will ensure good results.

Clay soils put more pressure on a wall than sandy soils because they hold moisture. To identify the soils, a good test is to pick up a small handful of the soil from at least 12 in. (300 mm) below the surface and squeeze it to form a ball. See the description of different soils below and how you can tell the difference and where they are best used.

## Wall Rock

**The soils used below and behind the wall are a critical part of the total wall structure.** A reinforced landscape wall contains four basic building materials - the AB blocks, wall rock, geogrid reinforcement (if required), and the infill soils surrounding the geogrid layers. During the installation process, use wall rock to create the leveling pad below the wall, in the block cores and behind the wall a minimum of 12 in. (300 mm). See the description of what wall rock consists of below.

## Building a Solid Foundation

If the on-site soils are of a very low quality under or behind the wall, you should remove and replace them with stronger soils. Using stronger soils will reduce reinforcement, allow faster compaction and have better long-term performance. Heavy clays and organic soils are both unsuitable in the reinforced zone and should be removed and replaced. Silty sands and sand with clay will require additional care, and attention to water management when placed and compacted.



### Clay Soils

Clay soil will stick together to form a ball. Clay soils retain moisture which will add pressure behind the walls. Typically most soils will be classified as clay and can be used in your project. However, they may require additional reinforcement.



### Sandy Soils

Sandy soil will not stick together because they are granular with no silty fine particles. These soils allow for good drainage and are ideal for building walls.



### Organic Soils

Organic soils will stick together but will not hold once the pressure is released. They should only be used to finish off the top 8 in. (200 mm) of a wall.

**NEVER use organic soils to build the wall.**



### Wall Rock

Wall rock is used behind the wall and beneath the base course to build a solid foundation. Made up of a crushed or smooth stone, well-graded, compactible and ranging in size from 0.25 in. to 1.5 in. (6 to 38 mm).

# Building on Solid Ground



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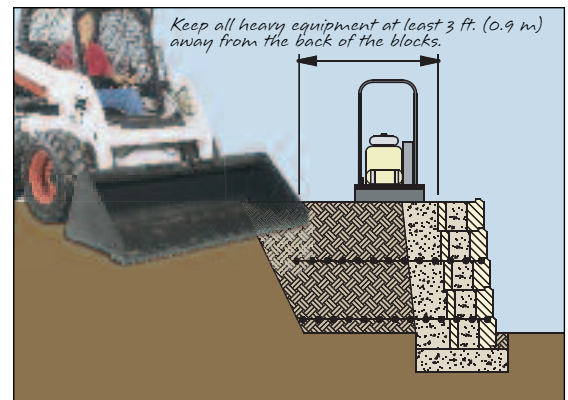
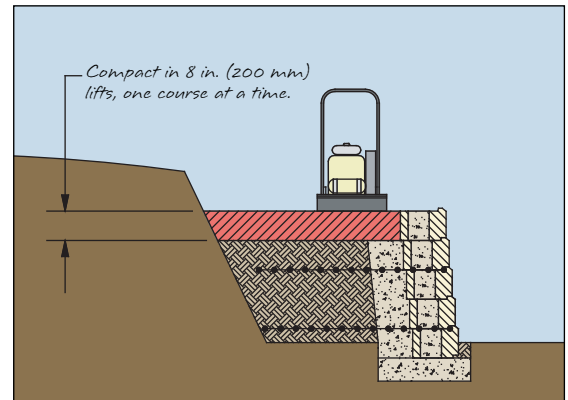
## Compaction

Compaction is the process of consolidating the soil by forcing out excess air and water. This is accomplished by applying a force or vibration to the soil mass.

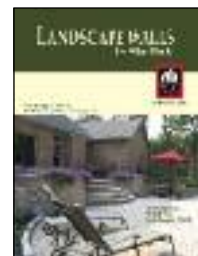
**Proper placement and compaction of the infill soils is critical.** The most important step in getting proper compaction is the placement of the soil in "lifts". Compacting in lifts, or layers, of less than 8 in. (200 mm) will facilitate quality compaction. Placement and compaction in lifts that exceed 8 in. (200 mm) will result in less than adequate soil strength. Compaction equipment must be sized according to the type of material being compacted. Always backfill and compact after each course of block is placed. Consult with a local equipment supplier to ensure that proper compaction equipment is used.

The consolidation zone runs from the back of the block back 3 ft. (0.9 m) into the infill soil. Only walk behind plate compaction equipment is allowed within the consolidation zone. A minimum of two passes with a walk behind plate compactor is required, starting on top of the block and compacting in paths that run parallel with the wall to the back of the excavated area.

Properly built and properly compacted Allan Block wall structures will perform. Know the soils and their characteristics before you start your project. Stage the wall with the right type of equipment and always build one course at a time, compacting in 8 in. (200 mm) maximum lifts.



For more information on properly built Allan Block walls, see our Installation Guides or visit our website at [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com)



Installation for landscape walls under 6 ft. (1.8 m) tall



Installation for wall applications over 6 ft. (1.8 m) tall



Find it all at [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com).

# *Hidden Benefits of the AB Collection*

The AB Collection has many different block options to choose from that offers a classic cut stone look and feel to the project. The smaller blocks of the collection - AB Jumbo Junior, AB Junior Lite and AB Lite Stone are perfect to build small to medium sized garden or landscape walls. The larger blocks - AB Stones and AB Classic are great for any application, but work best for medium to large landscape or commercial walls. With the blocks being modular, you can also blend them together to build patterned walls with an awesome "wow" factor.

In the AB Collection you will find our signature block - AB Stones. This is a good choice for any wall construction project. The built in setback delivers great leverage, performance and stability. AB Stones is the leader of the pack - the first block of the AB Collection and the unsung hero of the segmental retaining wall world.



No other product on the market can offer the same efficient performance and durability, while creating solutions with lasting beauty. With a 12° nominal setback, retaining walls using AB Stones can be built taller in good soil before reinforcement is necessary. This saves you time and money.

When planning your project, check out [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com) for all of the great ideas, videos, tools and much more and see for yourself the benefits of using AB Stones from the AB Collection of products.



# The Best Resource For Retaining Walls



Visit us at  
[allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com)

At [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com) you will find everything you need to plan, design and build with Allan Block products. We work hard to continually improve the look, feel and content of our website so that you can be confident to find what you need with just the click of a button.

Here are just a few things you can be sure to find at [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com):

- Photo Gallery
- Video Gallery
- Estimating Tools
- Product Details - Colors, Styles and Sizes
- Installation Guides & Tech Sheets
- Training Events
- Answers to FAQ's
- Find a Dealer Near You

#### **Did you Know?**

Allan Block has gone social - Check us out on **Facebook**, follow us on **Twitter**, watch us on **You Tube** and read our blog at [allanblockblog.com](http://allanblockblog.com) for the latest information.



**Take a look around...we think you will like what you see.**



Sign up at [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com) to receive the *Allan Block Landscapes* newsletter by e-mail.

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