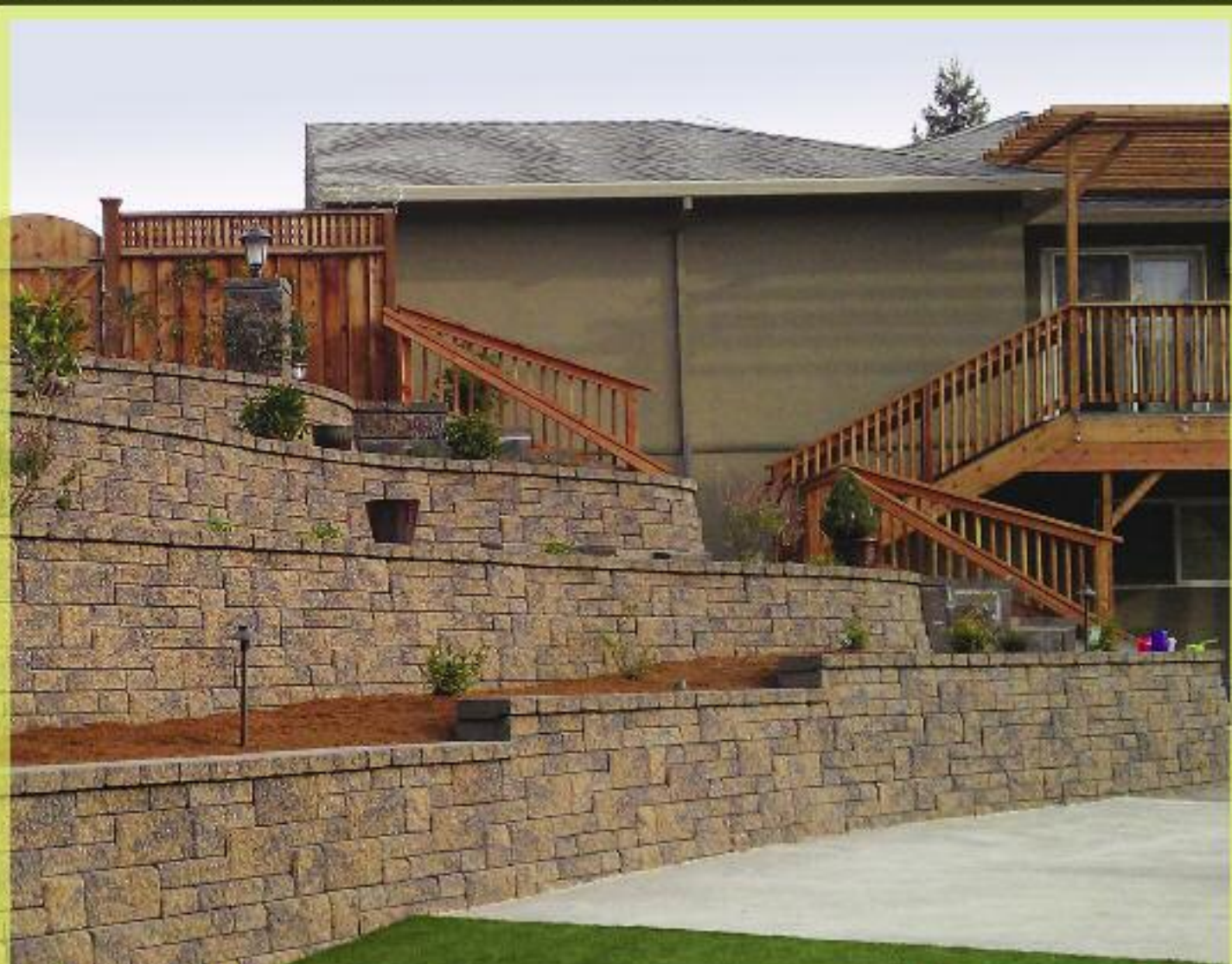


# ALLAN BLOCK LANDSCAPES

Newsletter for the Landscape Professional

Issue 34



## Inside:

- Slope Turned into Usable Space
- Contractors - Hiring or Want to be Hired?
- AB Fieldstone® - A Green, Natural & Friendly Product
- We have an App - Check it out!



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

# Beautiful Places to Play



Terraced walls create added dimension to any landscape as well as increasing useable space and functionality of an otherwise unruly hillside. This is exactly what the homeowners of this Northern California home needed.



With their new house perched atop a beautiful hill with sweeping views of the California countryside, their backyard was truly an eyesore. With a massive slope from the neighbor's yard next door and the need for usable space for entertaining and playing with the kids, these homeowners were definitely in need of a retaining wall.

After some research on different types of products, the homeowners liked the beauty and durability of a concrete retaining wall. But this job was going to take more than a Do-It-Yourselfer could handle. What they needed was a contractor, but where to begin looking? With so many different types of landscape contractors out in the market today they wanted to find someone they could trust and could handle the task at hand. To begin their contractor search, they contacted their local hardscapes dealer to ask for advice.

The dealer showed them a wide variety of retaining wall styles and colors and gave them the name of a trained AB Certified Contractor

who would be able to make their backyard dream a reality. Bill Healy of Healy Landscape Construction, Inc. was just the right guy for the job. Healy, a landscaping and masonry veteran was able to envision their backyard wishes and turn them into a reality.

Healy and his crew immediately got to work adding not one, but several retaining walls. The terraced walls created a beautiful area for plants and other landscaping accents as well as the much needed lawn and patio areas.

*"We take a personal interest in every customer and every project. Our goal is to realize each person's unique vision and do everything we can." - Bill Healy*

Now these homeowners have a beautiful backyard for playing with their children and entertaining their friends and family. The view out their back door is no longer an unsightly hillside but a wonderful place to play.



**Do you have a project you want us to promote. Send us an email - [info@allanblock.com](mailto:info@allanblock.com).**

# Hire or Be Hired: Tips for Retaining Wall Contractors

Many homeowners would rather hire an expert for their retaining wall and landscape projects rather than do it themselves. They don't want to waste time and money on something that is either more than they can tackle or will not turn out as they planned. They want their project done quickly and they want it done right.

Unfortunately, many homeowners are leery about hiring a contractor to do the job. Sometimes it is because they have had a bad experience with one or know someone who has.

The good news is that whether you are a homeowner looking for an expert to build your project or a contractor looking a project to build; there are some simple steps you can take to make sure you get what you are looking for.



## Finding the Right Contractor

While there's no guarantee that you will choose the "perfect" contractor to build your wall or patio project, there are some guidelines you can follow that will increase your chances of finding the right one for your landscape project.

**Check out their street cred.** Just because a contractor tells you they are an expert in retaining wall construction doesn't make it so. Choose a contractor that has had proper training on how to install the products you are using. A great way to do this is to choose a contractor who has been trained and certified to build quality walls. Ask the contractor if they are an AB Certified Contractor.



**Cheaper isn't always better.** Don't go with a contractor just because their bid came in the lowest. In many cases, contractors whose bid is significantly lower than the competition will end up taking shortcuts to increase their profit margin. This can result in poor installation practices, delays and most often, a homeowner disappointed with the end result.

**Get it in writing.** Make sure that the details of your project are outlined in a contract that is signed by both you and the contractor. If the scope of work changes while the project is in progress, be sure to get a change order. A change order should be a detailed account of the work to be added or removed from the project. It should also specify any changes in the cost of the project as well.

**Insurance matters.** Ask to see a copy of the contractor's general liability certificate, then call the insurance company and verify coverage. Contractors without insurance will often do the work for a lower price, but it comes with a risk. You could end up being financially responsible for any property damage or personal injury to workers.

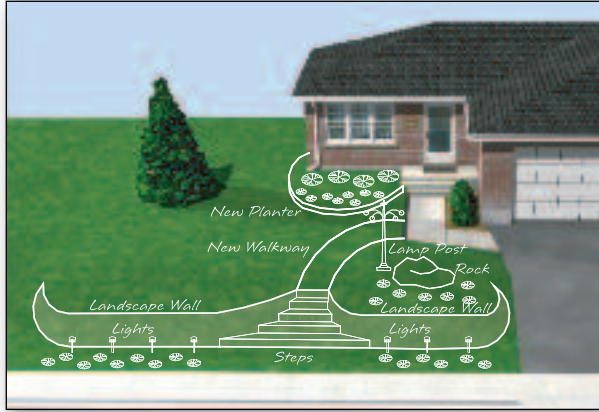
At the end of the day, use caution, do your research, and ask questions. The more you know about the contractor you choose, the better the fit and the better you will feel about the end result of your project.



## Being the Right Contractor

In today's market, being a contractor that builds excellent walls is not always enough to get the projects coming in and the customers asking for you. A tremendous amount of contractors are great at building walls, but are lousy business owners. So how do you set yourself apart from all the rest? How do you become the "right contractor" for a potential customer?

Here are some simple steps to take to make sure you are the contractor the customer is looking for.



**Be an expert.** Potential customers want to know that you and your whole crew are qualified to do the work they will be hiring you to do. Be certified and trained in the products you use and understand the local building codes and requirements. Position yourself to be the expert by having the training and the practical knowledge in your corner. In short, if you are not already an AB Certified Contractor - become one!

**It's ok to brag.** Have a portfolio with current project photos and references from previous clients. Potential new customers love to see examples of your past work which can not only show what our capabilities are but give them design ideas too. Take it a step further and have a list of projects that you have done in the area ready to go, just in case the homeowner wants to take a field trip to view some of your past work (front yard or visible projects only - you don't want anyone getting in trouble for trespassing).

**Just getting started?** Don't worry - There are a lot of photos available in Allan Block's literature that is also posted on [allanblock.com](http://allanblock.com) to use as references for potential projects and to create ideas for your new clients.

**Know how and what to bid.** Give proper estimates for labor, equipment and materials. Allan Block can help you with the right tools to estimate the proper materials, but labor and equipment are specific to you and your crew. If you are just getting started, the best thing to do is to keep detailed records of your work so you can reference your past project's profitability. Don't be afraid to take a business class or attend a seminar.

**Use the right equipment.** Keep everyone safe and do the job right by having the right tools to work with. In the long run, any equipment expenses will pay for themselves by allowing you and your crew to work efficiently.



**Last but certainly not least. Be professional.** From the job captain to the guy with the shovel in hand, each employee is a representative of your business. You may consider yourself the best sales person of your business, but a professional crew on the jobsite makes the homeowner your next best sales person. Presenting yourself and your employees as experts will not only reassure your clients that you are qualified for the work, but that you care for their project as much as they do.



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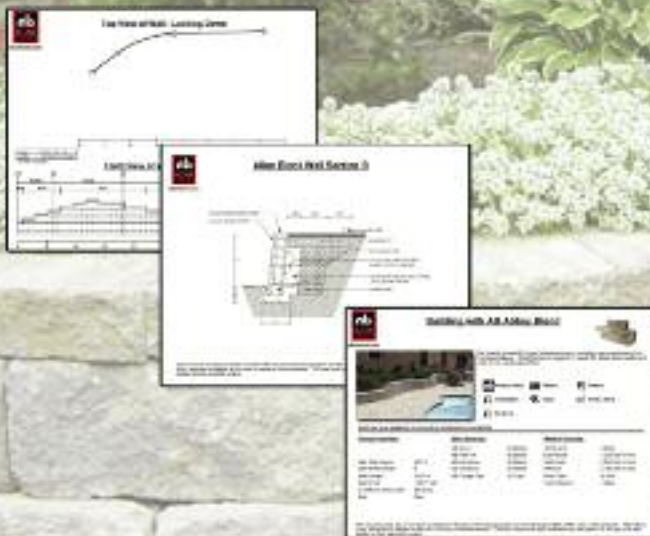
# Allan Block Estimator App



Works on iPad, iPhone, iPod

- Estimate Your Retaining Wall
- Allan Block Photo Gallery
- Featured Projects
- Receive a Material Proposal (via email in pdf)

## Now Available!



### Get It Now!



allanblock.com

# What does it mean to be Green?

Building with more environmentally useful products increases efficiency and reduces the negative impact we have on the world we live in.

A lot of emphasis has been put on being green or environmentally friendly, as we all look for ways to conserve, replenish and otherwise help the environment we live in. Allan Block has been building green for over 20 years and is geared up to bring more green solutions to the table.

## New Eco-Friendly Retaining Wall - AB Fieldstone®

The new revolution in retaining walls, AB Fieldstone is Green, Natural, and User-Friendly.

### Make Your Neighbors Green with Envy.

This two piece block system - the facing unit and the anchoring unit, allows the use of recycled materials in each assembly without sacrificing the beautiful appearance of the facing unit. AB Fieldstone anchoring units are always buried, so using a higher percentage of locally recycled materials in the anchoring unit will never affect the appearance of the wall. *Green*

### Naturally Unique.

AB Fieldstone has the visual elements of natural stone, bringing the strong character of the world's mountains to man-made retaining walls. *Natural*

### Friendly All Around.

Because the system is a multi-piece assembly, the blocks are lighter. These ergonomically-friendly blocks are easy to lift from a pallet and carry across difficult jobsites. Using the same practices as other Allan Block retaining wall products, AB Fieldstone is easy to install. *User-Friendly*



AB Fieldstone anchoring units are made using recycled materials.



[For more information about AB Fieldstone visit our website at allanblock.com.](http://allanblock.com)

## Allanblock.com - Everything You Need All In One Place



Allanblock.com has everything you need to plan, design and build your project - including complete installation details, installation videos, estimating tools, featured project profiles, product information and much more.



Visit our video gallery at allanblock.com to see a vast resource of installation information for building with the Allan Block products. When designing your project, make sure to use allanblock.com as your #1 resource!

### Did you Know?

Allan Block has gone social - Check us out on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, pin it on pinterest, watch us on You Tube and read our blog at allanblockblog.com for the latest information.



Sign up at allanblock.com to receive the *Allan Block Landscapes* newsletter by e-mail.