



LANDSCAPE LIFESTYLES

Tips & Tools For Landscape Professionals

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Out With The Old Wood - In With The New Block



While surprises are often good, sometimes they can present a serious challenge. Take the case of a Minnetonka, MN couple who decided to replace a degrading timber retaining wall in their pool and patio area. When the decayed and bulging retaining wall was removed, they discovered something unusual. Behind the first wall was yet another wall with decaying landscape timbers! A previous owner had simply layered a new timber wall over the original timber wall which had degraded.

In their search for a durable material that would not decay over time, the homeowners discovered the Europa Collection from Allan Block. The Autumn Blend color, manufactured by local producer Amcon Block, was a perfect accent to their wooded backyard setting.

Hunter Landscapes of Edina, MN produced the final design and handled the installation of the Allan Block retaining

wall. Hunter Landscapes' owner Ed Johnson summed up the project, "This was another typical decaying wood retaining wall - pitching forward, bad drainage, rotting and looking scary. The funny thing was that when we did the tear-out, we discovered another wood wall behind it. You would think the homeowner who installed the second timber wall would have realized that wood is only a temporary solution - two wrongs don't make a right."

Hunter Landscapes took advantage of Allan Block's Timber Replacement Program, a partnership with Waste Management Company to safely remove more than 300 square feet (28 m²) of treated timbers. Waste Management provided the owners with a letter certifying that the toxic wood timbers would be properly disposed of following EPA guidelines.

Johnson has nearly 15 years experience working with Allan Block products. "I used the Original Allan Block back in 1991 and have had numerous AB projects since then," stated Johnson. "Two seasons ago, my foreman and I attended an AB Contractor Certification Program. I picked up a

"This was another typical decaying wood retaining wall... pitching forward, bad drainage, rotting and looking scary"

Ed Johnson, Hunter Landscapes

few more tricks of the trade and got AB Certified. Installing the Abbey Blend patterned walls takes a little more time when you first work with it, but it's a nice looking product and the homeowners love it."

The current homeowners now look across their pool at their new Allan Block walls and know that they will retain their beauty and value - never needing replacement again.



Segmental Retaining Walls

Many people think of mortarless stackable blocks as a modern invention, but they existed thousands of years ago. We need only look at the Great Pyramids in Egypt to see the versatility and durability of mortarless stone construction. Recent advances in construction materials and techniques have taken dry stack construction to a new level.

Just 20 years ago, builders and homeowners needing retaining walls had a limited choice of materials and techniques: treated wood, cast-in-place concrete, concrete masonry block or natural stone. Each has its own limitations as to installation, design and cost.

For example, while **treated wood** may have been inexpensive to procure and abundantly available, they begin to rot and decay shortly after installation and have been declared an environmental hazard by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Although **natural stone** is a durable and beautiful material, high costs and installation difficulties limit its use in the average landscape project.



Treated Wood

- Deteriorates over time
- High maintenance
- Environmental hazard



Natural Stone

- Difficult installation
- High material costs
- Design limitations

	Allan Block SRW	Treated Wood	Mortared Concrete Block	Cast-In-Place Concrete	Natural Stone
Product durability	√	No	√	√	√
Unlimited design options	√	No	No	No	√
Easy to install	√	√	No	No	No
No footing required below frost depth	√	√	Footing Required	Footing Required	√
Installed by unskilled labor	√	√	No	No	√
Wall flexibility	√	No	No	No	√
Low cost materials	√	√	No	No	No
Applications	Residential Commercial	Residential	Residential Commercial	Commercial	Residential
Contractor profitability	↑	↓	↓	↓	↓
Product growth potential	↑	↓	↓	Stable	Stable
Average Costs/Sq. Ft	\$15 - \$25	\$10 - \$20	\$30 - \$40	\$40 - \$50	\$20 - \$40

Are King Of The Hill

Mortared concrete block and cast-in-place concrete walls involve highly paid, skilled labor and take more time to install and they will need stone or brick facings if aesthetics are important.

In 1986, Allan Block introduced its first Segmental Retaining Wall block (SRW). The "Original" Allan Block featured an innovative concrete block design that allowed retaining walls to be built quickly and easily without footings, mortar joints or pins. The retaining wall market hasn't been the same since.

Each of the different retaining wall materials has unique attributes that make it suitable for different wall projects and job sites. Before choosing a wall material, architects and contractors should consider the differences and advantages of each.

Factors to evaluate include the quality and durability of the material, necessary labor skills, installation ease and total project costs. The table on the opposite page highlights the key differences between the materials.

Mortared Concrete Block

- Limited design options
- High install cost
- Requires frost footings



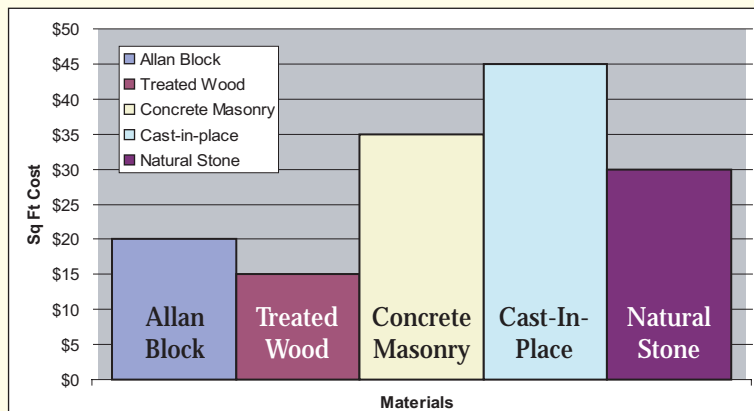
Cast-In-Place Concrete

- Labor intensive
- High install cost
- Requires frost footings



Total Installed Cost Per Square Foot

The chart below shows typical total costs for each type of retaining wall. Costs include not only the material, but the labor and installation as well. Soil excavation, common for concrete masonry and cast-in-place concrete, along with skilled labor, greatly increases the costs and complexity for using those materials.



Each of the retaining wall products has its place. When considering which product to use on your next job, look at the total costs and both immediate and long-term benefits. When you add it all up, Allan Block delivers the best overall value, selection, style, performance and cost.

Allan Block Segmental Retaining Walls

- Durable
- Economical
- Easy to install
- Environmentally friendly
- Full array of design options
- Great for retaining soil



AB: The Best Alternative To Treated Wood



After



Before

Visit www.allanblock.com for additional information on Allan Block's Timber Replacement Program.



Before



After

Expand Your Landscape Design Options

The AB Courtyard Collection, introduced this spring in several major cities across North America, brings a new dimension in landscape design to landscape contractors and designers. Landscape professionals and homeowners who are looking for innovative ways to add details such as freestanding walls, posts, seating walls and landscape accents have discovered the beauty and versatility of the AB Courtyard Collection.

Take a look at the designs shown here and at allanblock.com to see how Allan Block Wall Systems and AB Courtyard Walls can be combined to create stunning outdoor environments. Contact your local Allan Block professional for product availability in your area.



- Patio Enclosures
- Seating Walls
- Landscape Accents
- Fountains and Planters



The **Courtyard**
Collection



The Latest in Professional Landscaping Solutions

AB Contractor Certification - What, Why, How?

Landscape contractors looking to enhance their knowledge and skills in AB landscape wall construction can contact their nearest Allan Block professional for a schedule of upcoming AB Contractor Certification Classes. It's a great way to spend a half-day in the off-season learning the latest tips and techniques in wall design and construction.

Find out how you can learn the practical skills that have helped thousands of landscape professionals build their businesses with Allan Block. For more information on upcoming Contractor Certification Classes, visit www.allanblock.com to find your nearest Allan Block professional.



Estimating and Ordering are a Snap!

Estimating AB block and grid materials couldn't be easier. Allan Block offers both an estimating software program and a laminated calculator wheel for quickly estimating all the materials needed to build a landscape wall up to 6 feet high (1.8 m). Block, AB Reinforcement Grid, base rock and backfill materials, drain tile and capstones are all easily calculated. Visit our web site at www.allanblock.com or your local AB Professional for more information.



Landscape Design CD - Complete Design & Installation Information

For professional landscape ideas and inspiration, sign up to receive Allan Block's Landscape Design CD at www.allanblock.com. Packed with information to help you plan, design and build landscape walls up to six feet high (1.8 m), this CD includes product specifications, installation guidelines and a valuable material estimating program.

Sign up to get **LANDSCAPE LIFESTYLES** by e-mail.

To receive the AB Landscape Lifestyles Newsletter directly in your e-mail box each quarter, sign up online at www.allanblock.com.



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