

Better Homes and Gardens Special Interest Publications

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YOURSELF™

Outdoor Living

Ideas for your garden & yard



WALLS, PATHS & PATIOS

step into style

Add new dimension to your garden path with stepping-stones made of clever concrete shapes.

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 TIME
2 hrs

 COST
\$

 SKILL
level 2



how to make a concrete button stone

What you'll need:

- ___ Heavy-duty plastic mixing tub
- ___ Quikrete crack-resistant concrete mix
- ___ Trowel
- ___ Round plastic pot liner
- ___ Circular imprints for button designs (we used plastic lids)
- ___ Small cylinders to create button-hole design (we used Crayola marker caps)
- ___ Paintbrush (optional)
- ___ Exterior paint (optional)
- ___ Exterior-grade spray sealant (optional)

step 1

Pour concrete into mixing tub (a). Follow manufacturer's instructions for adding water (b). Mix with trowel (c) until it reaches the consistency of cookie dough.

step 2

Fill the plastic pot liner with concrete mix (d). Smooth the surface with the side of the trowel (e).

step 3

Center plastic lid or other design-imprint choice in the concrete and press firmly (f). Remove lid. Insert two

or four cylinders to create button holes (g); then remove.

step 4

Allow concrete to dry according to manufacturer's instructions. Remove from mold and allow to cure. This may take up to a week; check manufacturer's instructions.

step 5

If desired, paint the stepping-stone. After paint dries, thoroughly coat the surface with sealant to protect the color.

Button stone Use a variety of circular forms to create extra-large button-shape stepping stones. The basic shape comes from plastic pot liners; choose whatever size suits your fancy. Then dress them up with centers formed using almost any round object—container lids, old plates, even a decorative ceiling medallion.

TIP

To get a good imprint, follow the industry term "thumbprint hard." That's when the concrete has just started to dry but is still wet enough to imprint designs. Water will not pool into impressions at this stage.

TIP

Make the stepping-stones about 1½–2 inches thick. Thinner stones may crack. Lay the stones on smooth ground to prevent breakage. For added strength, place chicken wire in the middle of the concrete as you fill the mold.



Fabric stone Give a paver colorful style by covering it with sturdy outdoor fabric. When sealed, the fabric edges won't fray and it'll be strong enough to withstand both weather and foot traffic. A round print in bright hues, such as these suzani-style patterns, adds year-round color to the garden.



how to make a fabric-covered stone



What you'll need:

- Quikrete crack-resistant concrete mix
- Round plastic pot liner
- Outdoor fabric
- Decoupage medium
- Paintbrush
- Exterior-grade spray sealant

step 1

Make a round concrete stepping-stone using as a mold a plastic pot liner slightly larger than the print you've chosen. (See page 59 for instructions on making and molding concrete.)

step 2

Allow concrete to dry and cure according to manufacturer's instructions.

step 3

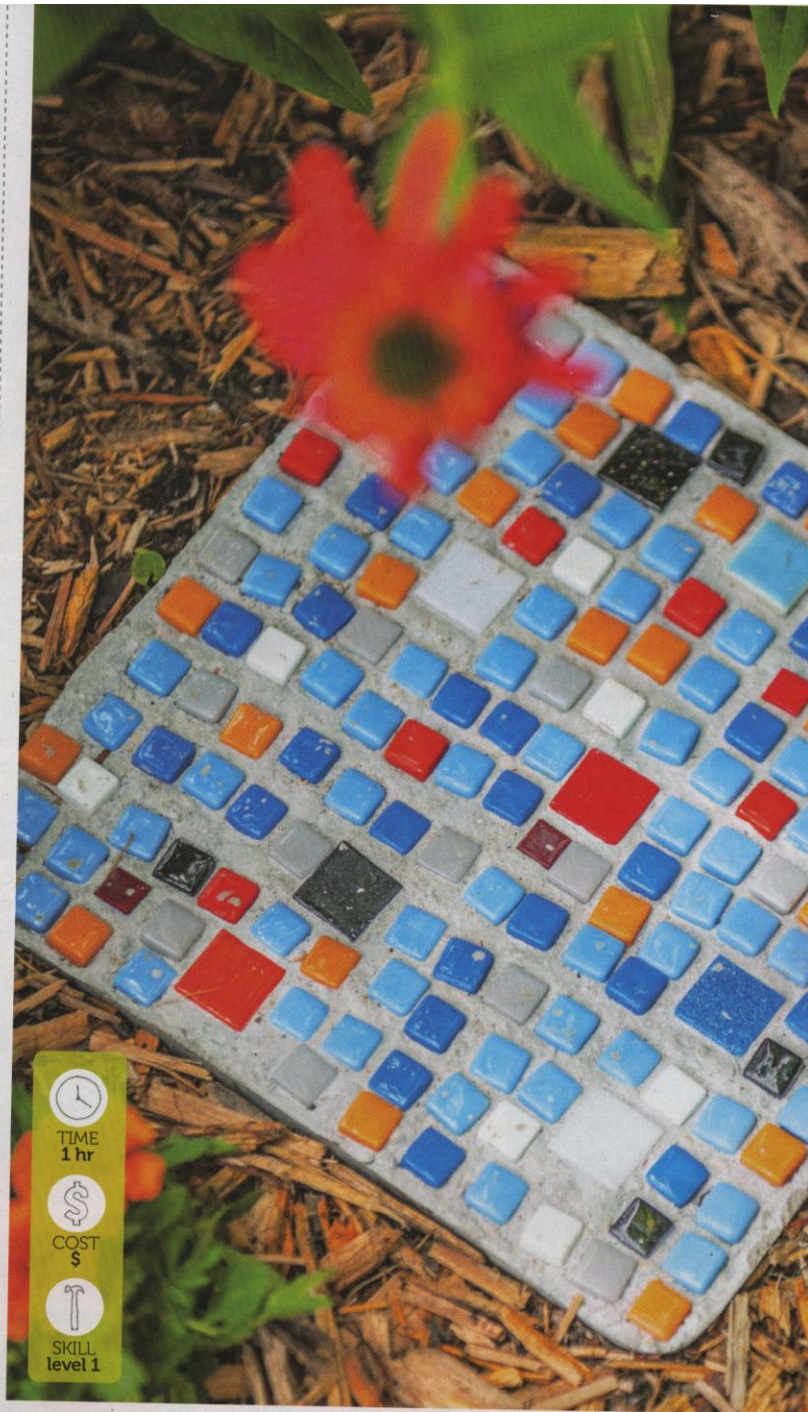
Cut fabric to desired-size circle. Cover the surface of the stepping-stone with decoupage medium (a). Place fabric on the coated concrete.

step 4

Cover the fabric with decoupage medium (b). Allow to dry, and apply a second coat. When that coat is dry, spray the entire surface with sealant.



Paw-print stone An old cake pan in the shape of an animal paw print is perfect to create stepping-stones for a dog lover's garden. You can use almost any flat metal cake pan to make stepping-stones in interesting shapes. To make sure the concrete releases from the pan, spray the pan with cooking spray. Follow the concrete mixing and molding instructions on *page 59*. After leveling the concrete, cover the pan with a plastic shopping bag to keep it from drying too quickly.



Mosaic stone Repeat the shape of mosaic tile by making a square concrete step. An old cake pan is the perfect choice for a mold. Spraying the pan with cooking spray first ensures the concrete won't stick. Make the concrete and fill the mold following the instructions on *page 59*. After leveling the surface, gently press square mosaic tiles into the surface in your desired pattern. To keep the concrete from drying too quickly, cover the pan with plastic.

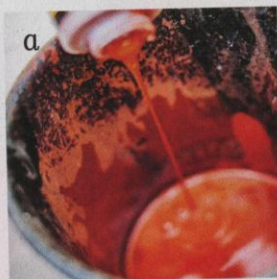


House-number stone

Customize a colored stepping-stone by including your house number. The surface of this step will be very smooth—the bottom of the plastic mold is the top of the step. The numbers are placed in the mold first. Make sure they are backward so they will be correct when the stone is removed from the mold.

TIP

A slow drying process yields a stronger stone, so cover the filled mold with plastic or spray the stone with water every hour for the first several hours. Concrete dries more quickly in hot, dry conditions.



how to make a house-number stone

What you'll need:

- Quikrete crack-resistant concrete mix
- Heavy-duty plastic mixing tub
- Quikrete concrete pigment (we used terra-cotta)
- Small bucket
- Stir stick
- Trowel
- Spray adhesive
- Metal house numbers
- Clear octagon plastic pot liner
- Small leaves, if desired

step 1

Mix concrete pigment in small bucket (a). Then mix pigment into concrete following manufacturer's instructions (b). (See page 59 for instructions

on making and molding concrete.)

step 2

Spray fronts of the numbers with adhesive and place carefully in pot liner. Make sure numbers are backward. If desired, spray small leaves and place in the mold.

step 3

Carefully lay the concrete on top of the numbers (c). Lightly pack and smooth the concrete.

step 4

Don't move the mold once it is filled with concrete. Allow concrete to dry, and remove mold. Peel off the leaves. Use the tip of the trowel to remove any concrete along the edges of the metal numbers.









TIME
2 hrs

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Leaf stone Nature makes wonderful patterns that easily transfer to concrete. We used a hosta leaf, but any large leaf will do. Use the underside of the leaf because the veining is more pronounced and will be more dramatic on your stone. Always keep concrete inside the outline of the leaf; any concrete that goes over the edge will stick and harden to the cardboard.



how to make a leaf stone

What you'll need:

- Quikrete crack-resistant concrete mix
- Large piece of cardboard
- Hosta leaf
- Rubber gloves
- Trowel
- Foam paintbrush
- Exterior paint
- Exterior-grade spray sealant (optional)

step 1

Lay a large hosta leaf upside down on the cardboard. Wearing rubber gloves,

carefully mound and shape concrete (a). (See page 59 for instructions on making and molding concrete.)

step 2

Use trowel to cut and shape the concrete. Keep the mix within the edges of the leaf (b).

step 3

Allow concrete to dry to the touch, then remove the leaf. Allow to cure. Paint the leaf stone to match its natural counterpart (c). Seal if desired.

Finishing tips

EASY RELEASE: Before filling the mold, spray it with cooking spray. And before turning the mold over after the concrete has dried, pull the edges of the mold away from the concrete. Tapping the bottom of the mold may also help.

CURING: After the concrete has dried, you can remove it from the mold, but it's not ready for finishing: It still has to cure. That process takes several days to a week, depending on the type of concrete and weather conditions. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to get the best results.