

Using wood outside of the house is not a new concept. Commonly, porches, decks and fences are constructed of wood. Also, benches, arbors, maybe a gazebo are made of wood. Today, let's consider using wood in the yard beyond the deck or patio.

Wooden paths, boardwalks, and raised seating or entertaining areas not attached to the house are possibilities I'd like for us to explore. Maybe your mind can be expanded as to the uses of wood in the landscape.

Wooden paths, bridges, maybe roads and piers are both ancient and modern uses of wood. They really are not that complicated on residential scaled projects. For example, more than once I have been asked to design a bridge across a small stream or dry creek in a backyard—simple ones can be done in a day or two.

Paths, bridges, observation platforms or

towers built of wood can last at least 20 years, often longer. The point that needs emphasis, though, is that the timber should be cedar, redwood, locust, Osage orange, or some other very durable wood, or be "pressure treated" with a copper-containing solution as preservative.

Pressure-treated lumber is available at most building supply stores. Wood actually in contact with wet soil should probably be of the grade treated with a .4 percent copper solution instead of the standard .25 percent (ask your lumber store salesperson).

Wood paths and roads are one of the oldest forms of paving. Anciently, the Japanese used wooden paths. In early America, logs were split to form "corduroy" roads for the stagecoaches to travel successfully over soft muddy sections of the way.

Long raised paths can be somewhat more expensive than concrete or stone paths. However, you'll have a very special path if you build all or part from wood. (You know, like in the monopoly game, "Boardwalk" is a place of distinction!)

Besides wooden paths, extending from a dock or landing, there are bridges. They may be raised observation "towers" along or at the

end of a "boardwalk". Perhaps a pier into a waterfeature or lake. How about a tree house? Or a raised deck surrounding a large shade tree. Why don't you do a little dreaming as to where a wooden path might lead!

Wooden paths are as easy as concrete or stone ones and are very durable if built well and wood is more interesting and user-friendly than concrete walks, pebble paths or mortared stone walkways.

Consider a foundation of sound, used railroad crossties to keep new wood off the ground. Alternatively, concrete piers can be used for your treated posts and larger support timbers.

The cost may be greater, but don't let the project scare you. Boardwalks can set your place apart from the crowd.

If you have a stream, wetland, or a valley to cross, consider paving the way with wood for a distinctive look. The scenery will likely be more lovely from the raised vantage point as well.

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