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## Contractor's Corner

WITH RICK THOMAS



Dear Mr. Contractor

Recently, we tiled our kitchen floor in 12 x 12 adhesive tile. I dropped a can on the floor and put a dent in one of the tiles. It looks unsightly. I have extra tiles in the basement that were left over when we did the job. Is there any way to repair the damage without looking different than the rest?

Thanks in advance  
Karen J.

Dear Karen

Use a propane torch and heat the tile gradually. Once it is warm, pry up a corner and pull the tile back, being very careful not to burn yourself, as it will be hot. Then replace the tile with a leftover new tile. You won't even notice the difference.

(If the thought of using a torch makes you nervous, or if you don't have one around, try using a hair blow dryer. It will work just as well, but it's a little slower process.)

Thanks Karen and good luck on your minor improvement  
Rick

Contractor's Corner will run again on Friday, May 6th. Send any questions or any of your own handy hints, which may interest our readers, to askacontractor@yahoo.ca by Friday, April 29th.



# board & batten

ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME & GARDEN

## Giving You the Dirt

BY SEAN JAMES, N.P.D.,  
PRESIDENT OF FERN RIDGE LANDSCAPING

### Some design fundamentals

I was wrong last month about spring being here. Winter won't quit this year. Relentless. As I write this in late March, it is snowing again, (still?). (I do have Crocus and Snowdrops in full bloom so there is hope.)

There are several tips to be shared about design. Each is fairly simple in its own right but also fundamental to an attractive, functional landscape.

Gardens evolve as our tastes change. That's only natural but it leads to a hodge-podge of styles and materials. A solution is to choose one material for pathways throughout the entire garden. My house will all be of limestone flag, mostly random with some square-cut flag. One of the nice things about flag is it can be used for formal areas, informal areas or even just as stepping-stones through a garden. It's difficult to achieve that with interlock.

A beautiful but expensive option, (no surprise there), is the new clay brick look-alike. It's a concrete stone but it's 'wet cast' so it has a much different finish on it. Many people I know ask for reclaimed brick paths and I've always had to say 'No' because it won't last here. Now it's possible. Again, whatever your choice, using the same material will tie it all together.

I'm a fan of limiting lawns wherever possible because they require so much moisture and fertilizer. If you insist on grass, create smooth curves where flowerbeds meet buildings, fences and drives. This is more pleasing to the eye and, more relaxing subconsciously. More importantly, soft, rounded lines make mowing much easier. Imagine no fiddly right angles that need trimming! No time spent maneu-

vering the mower around tight corners - just one long fluid sweep. I'm actually of the opinion that no landscape designer or architect should be allowed to put pen to paper until that person has mowed lawns for a couple of years. It's the same problem as car designer who have CLEARLY never worked on a car. Mowing, (and pet peeves) aside, all but the most formal of gardens will benefit aesthetically from having smoothly curved gardens.

Another simple design fundamental is to "avoid uprights". Everyone seems to want upright Junipers along the front of their homes. Most people seem to want them because everyone else has them. There are more than enough straight lines in your house! An object of your garden is to soften those lines. If you want to have one upright like a Skyrocket Juniper or an Emerald Cedar out in the garden to pull the lines in the house forward, so be it. Remember, when it reaches the desired size it should be trimmed in mid-May and again in October. Otherwise it will only need to be pulled out in a few years. Every year, hundreds of landscapers suffer pokes, prods and contact dermatitis trying to remove badly placed, badly chosen, badly sold and overgrown Junipers at the front of people's houses. Unpleasant. If you won't avoid these plants for the sake of the design, do it for the poor soul who'll have to pull them out in a few years.

That'll have to be it for this month even though I'd like to rant about texture for a bit. I hope everyone made it to the great show that was Canada Blooms.

(Add texture, Texture, TEXTURE! There I squeeze it in!)

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