

Conversation to create:

ME: over the last five years, what are the three biggest trends in hardscaping?

ChatGPT said:

ME: Are you looking for general hardscaping trends across the industry, or trends specific to a certain region (e.g., Florida, the U.S., global market)? Also, do you want trends related to materials, design styles, sustainability, or all of the above?

ME: maine...all

ChatGPT said:

Great! I'll gather insights on the top three hardscaping trends in Maine over the past five years, covering materials, design styles, and sustainability. I'll let you know once I have the details.

Top Hardscaping Trends in Maine (2018–2023)

Maine homeowners have embraced several key **hardscaping trends** over the past five years. These trends reflect a desire to extend living space outdoors, utilize the state's natural materials, and adopt more sustainable practices. Below, we outline the **top three trends** in Maine hardscape design – highlighting popular materials, design styles, eco-friendly solutions, and regional factors (climate, preferences, regulations) driving each trend.

1. Outdoor Living & Entertaining Spaces

Maine residents are investing in **outdoor living areas** that function as extensions of their homes. Patios, terraces, and decks are being outfitted with **fire pits, fireplaces, and full outdoor kitchens** to create inviting entertainment spaces year-round. Spurred in part by the

pandemic (when people realized the value of at-home recreation), homeowners now see outdoor living space as essential for relaxation and socializing

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. Features like **stone fire pits** have surged in popularity – not only serving as focal points for gatherings, but also providing warmth on Maine’s chilly evenings to extend the outdoor season

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. Likewise, **outdoor kitchens and bars** have become “must-haves” for those who enjoy cooking and dining outside. In Midcoast Maine, for example, a well-built stone outdoor kitchen adds both functionality and elegance to the yard, creating an “unrivaled cooking and entertaining space” that can withstand the elements

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Design styles emphasize comfort and multi-functionality. Many patios incorporate **built-in seating walls, pergolas, and accent lighting** to enhance usability after dark. Homeowners often blend hardscape with softscape for a cozy ambiance – think outdoor sofas and rugs paired with stone hearths or brick ovens. Privacy is also addressed through creative hardscaping (such as strategic stone walls or fences) to make these outdoor rooms feel secluded. The overall goal is an “**indoor-outdoor**” lifestyle, blurring the line between house and yard. This trend has even led to interest in *four-season* outdoor design – adding pergola covers, movable screens, and propane heaters so the space remains enjoyable despite Maine’s sudden weather changes

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Regional factors heavily influence this trend. Maine’s climate, with its long winters and cool nights, drives demand for heating elements like fire pits and fireplaces to boost year-round livability

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. Coastal and lakeside homeowners, accustomed to outdoor recreation, cherish these alfresco living areas as part of the Maine lifestyle

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. At the same time, any hardscape additions must be built tough – using frost-resistant materials and proper drainage – to survive freeze-thaw cycles and heavy snow loads. Designers account for this by selecting durable masonry and providing slopes or permeable joints so that patios don’t heave or ice over in winter

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. Overall, the outdoor living trend reflects Mainers' love of nature and home: whether it's a summer barbecue on the patio or gathering around a fire pit in October, people are maximizing their outdoor enjoyment at home. (Sources: Stone Solutions Maine

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; Farley Inc.

farleyinc.com

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2. Natural Stone & Mixed-Materials Aesthetics

Maine's hardscapes are trending toward a **natural, timeless look** by using local **stone** and creatively mixing materials. **Natural stone** – such as granite, bluestone, flagstone, and fieldstone – is often the top choice for patios, walkways, and walls, thanks to its New England charm and durability in Maine's harsh climate

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. Granite and bluestone in particular are popular; these stones offer a range of earthy colors (blue-grays, rusty reds, tans) that blend with the landscape and they withstand freeze-thaw weather without cracking

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. Homeowners are advised to “*choose natural stone or pavers that complement the style of your home and blend seamlessly with the surroundings,*” as this ensures any new hardscape feels integrated with Maine's environment

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. The result is an aesthetic that often echoes the region's rustic elegance – think classic stone garden paths, dry-laid fieldstone walls, and granite slab steps that look like they've always belonged on the property.

At the same time, designers are **mixing materials** more than ever to add visual interest. It's no longer one-note; a single project might combine flagstone patios with brick or concrete paver accents, wooden pergolas, and metal or granite detailing. This “mixed mediums” approach creates contrast in textures and colors for a lively, custom look

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. For example, a modern Maine patio might use sleek precast *concrete pavers* in the dining area transitioning to natural irregular *fieldstone* around a fire pit

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. **Dark woods** (for decks or accent trim) and **natural-colored concrete** are also being paired with stone to merge contemporary lines with organic materials

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. The style spectrum ranges from **rustic** (irregular stone slabs, boulder fire pits, log accents) to **clean and contemporary** (geometric paver patterns, linear retaining walls), but all with a warm, earth-inspired palette. Maine's design ethos often merges old and new – a reflection of the state's heritage and modern tastes. As one New England stone supplier noted, whether the look is "rustic or contemporary, minimal or intricate," the key is balancing hardscape with the natural setting for a cohesive design

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. **Popular materials** in this trend include natural quarried stones (granite, bluestone/sandstone, slate), reclaimed stone or locally harvested rock (for walls and stepping stones), classic clay brick, and high-quality **concrete pavers**. Pavers have improved in style options – today's products come in "*graceful shapes, rich colors and varied textures*," including permeable versions, allowing Maine homeowners to enjoy the look of brick or stone in a more budget-friendly, modular format

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. Many projects use pavers in tandem with stone; for instance, a patio might use manufactured pavers for the main surface but edge it with a border of natural cobblestones or integrate a flagstone section for contrast. **Brick** is used selectively, often for traditional colonial accents or in historic districts, providing "*refined yet welcoming*" charm in hues from terra cotta to blue-gray

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. **Gravel and crushed stone** remain common for informal paths or driveways – they're affordable, drain well, and have a simple rural appeal (using local crushed granite or bluestone gravel)

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. In fact, in winter-prone climates, coarse crushed stone is recommended over fine gravel to avoid slushy mess and movement under snow removal

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. An underlying reason for this materials trend is Maine's abundance of natural stone and the desire for low-maintenance longevity. Stone and quality pavers can "*withstand the elements*" and stay attractive for decades

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– a practical necessity given Maine’s weather. They also connect the design to Maine’s landscape: a granite walkway or retaining wall built from local stone feels authentic and “of the place.” Homeowners are effectively investing in hardscape elements that **never go out of style** farleyinc.com

and even add to resale value with classic curb appeal. From a regulatory perspective, using natural, permeable materials (like spaced flagstones with plant joints, or gravel) can help meet town requirements for lot coverage and stormwater management, which subtly encourages this trend (more on that below). In summary, Maine’s hardscape designs are gravitating to a **mix of natural and engineered materials** that offer beauty, toughness, and harmony with the region’s character. (Sources: Stone Solutions Maine stonesolutionsmaine.com

stonesolutionsmaine.com

; Farley Inc.

farleyinc.com

; Stone Solutions “Walkways” Guide

stonesolutionsmaine.com

stonesolutionsmaine.com

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3. Sustainable & Eco-Friendly Hardscaping Solutions

Sustainability has become a major theme in Maine landscaping, and hardscaping is no exception. The third big trend is a shift toward **eco-friendly, low-impact hardscape practices** that protect Maine’s natural environment. Homeowners and designers are increasingly mindful of **stormwater management** – preventing runoff and pollution – as well as preserving native ecosystems. For example, landscape experts in Maine report “*a growing number of clients asking about water retention, water recycling, and runoff*” during the design process

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. This has led to features like **permeable pavements, dry wells, and rain gardens** being integrated alongside hardscapes. **Permeable pavers** are a popular solution: these specialized pavers (often concrete or clay units with porous joints) allow rain to seep through into the ground rather than sheeting off. They help recharge groundwater and reduce erosion, which is especially valuable in Maine’s lake and coastal areas. Many homeowners find permeable paver driveways or patios an attractive way to handle rain – as one source notes, they “*address drainage concerns through sand-filled joints*” while providing a stable surface

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. Maine’s Department of Environmental Protection even has guidelines and approval processes for permeable paver installations, underscoring their role in meeting stormwater regulations

maine.gov

. In other words, using permeable hardscape is not just a trend but sometimes a requirement in environmentally sensitive zones.

Beyond pavers, Maine hardscape projects are incorporating **vegetated and natural elements** to work with the environment. One approach is “*restorative landscaping*,” which aims to mimic natural habitat by using native plants, minimizing soil disturbance, and preventing runoff

[greenmainehomes.com](https://www.greenmainehomes.com)

. In practice, this might mean replacing a portion of lawn with a wildflower meadow or installing a dry stream bed (lined with local stone) to channel stormwater. Hardscape features like **stone swales, infiltration trenches, and retention ponds** are being built to manage heavy rain and snowmelt – often disguised beautifully as garden features. For coastal and lakefront properties, there’s emphasis on maintaining vegetative **buffer zones** and using **organic (chemical-free) maintenance** so that runoff from patios or driveways doesn’t pollute waterways

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. Maine’s YardScaping program and lake conservation groups encourage designs that “*promote buffers to protect waterways*,” use native, non-invasive plants, reduce expansive lawns, and minimize runoff

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. Hardscape design aligns with these principles by, for example, choosing gravel or spaced paver paths (which let water soak in between), over large continuous concrete slabs. In forested or rural lots, homeowners often opt to leave mature trees and design patios around them, retaining natural shade and soil stability. Using **local materials** is another eco-friendly choice: sourcing Maine-quarried stone or recycled pavers reduces the carbon footprint of a project and ensures the materials are suited to the local climate and soil conditions

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Sustainable hardscaping also overlaps with the earlier trends: for instance, permeable patios and native plantings can coexist with a beautiful outdoor living space. Many Maine homeowners now seek an “**environmentally sustainable outdoor oasis**” – perhaps a patio built from reclaimed granite, bordered by a rain garden of ferns and blueberries, with a rain barrel or cistern tucked into the design. Edible and pollinator-friendly gardens are often incorporated at the edges of hardscape, reflecting a broader environmental ethic. A 2020 landscaping survey in Maine noted a rise in “*pollinator gardens*” and “*locavore landscapes*” (features like backyard orchards or even beehives) as a top trend alongside sustainable hardscape improvements

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. While these are more planting-focused, they influence hardscape layouts (for example, creating pathways to raised vegetable beds, or stone bases for beehives and compost bins). There’s also interest in using solar-powered landscape lighting and energy-efficient outdoor appliances, tying into Maine’s larger climate-action goals

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Regional factors driving this green trend include Maine’s pristine natural resources – residents have a strong incentive to protect their lakes, rivers, and coastline from erosion and runoff. Stringent **shoreland zoning and stormwater regulations** push builders toward low-impact development techniques (like permeable pavements and infiltration features) in many areas

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. Maine’s climate, with intense spring thaws and occasional heavy downpours, makes drainage a critical design concern; poorly drained hardscapes can lead to flooding or property damage

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. Thus, functional sustainability is as much a safety measure as an environmental one.

Homeowner preferences have also evolved: there’s growing awareness of native plants and habitat, and a desire for landscapes that “*work with nature*” rather than against it

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. This might mean smaller lawns and more hardscape in some cases – but hardscape that is porous, locally sourced, and integrated with greenery. In summary, Maine’s hardscaping trends have taken an eco-conscious turn, with designs that aim to be **both beautiful and environmentally responsible**. From permeable paver patios to stone rain gardens and native groundcover between stepping stones, sustainable solutions are becoming standard practice in Maine landscape design. (**Sources: Terrapin Landscapes**

terrapinlandscapes.com

terrapinlandscapes.com

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