



LET'S GET VERTICAL

BY SCOTT PHILP | PHOTOS COURTESY OF LANDSCAPE LOGIC

The days of homeowners viewing their property as something to enjoy aesthetically are, for the most part, in the past. Owners are increasingly seeking to spend more time in the temperate Michigan summer climates – both during the day and at night.

This demand has presented new opportunities to create vertical elements in the landscape through using conventional and unconventional products. Grills, kitchens, fireplaces, pizza ovens, water features, fountains, and sculptural art are

Landscaping isn't limited to the ground level anymore. Between creativity and unique material selection, useable outdoor spaces are more imaginable than ever.

all examples of vertical landscape opportunities a homeowner can have installed on their property.

Natural stone, a timeless material used for thousands of years, is the most authentic product available for vertical landscape elements. Whether dry-stacked or installed in a

wet-laid application, the possibilities are endless in how natural stone can be used. Veneer stone is a popular choice as well, as it provides a lightweight and often less costly option to conventional stone structures.

Color, density, and availability are all considerations when deciding a type of natural stone to use for your outdoor living space. Round fieldstone boulders, flat ledge stone, and thinner flagstone are all great options for “going vertical” in your landscape. Many of these elements require an experienced tradesman to install them to create an enduring structure, so be sure you or your contractor is well-versed in working with different stone materials before beginning a project.

Traditional brick is a very popular option as well, especially in urban areas. Often clad in the identical brick facade of the residence, this media can further unify outdoor living elements with your home. Constructing the proper foundation is paramount, and is essential in creating a brick structure that will stand the test of time. With brick veneer stone available in many colors and textures, construction techniques are easier than ever and still provide a classic appearance.

If a property has characteristics of rolling terrain or steep slopes, a landscape designer is presented the opportunity to harness these elements and use retaining walls for more than just retention. Carving a rugged fireplace into the slope is a great way to turn a utilitarian retaining wall into a

Whether a print or a poster,
a piece of original artwork,
or a precious family heirloom



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focal point in the landscape. More natural than manmade, this vertical element resembles a product of primitive construction techniques and materials, adding a historical element to any landscape.

Unusual materials often create the most stunning vertical elements in a landscape. Reclaimed material from a previous structure is a great choice, as it provides historical nostalgia and a story to tell when enjoying the outdoor living space. Distressed steel is also another unconventional medium to use vertically for walls, fireplaces, or outdoor kitchens. It can age with the landscape and often provides a more contemporary feeling than that of natural stone products.

Man's pursuit of replicating nature has also produced much fruit in recent years. The world of faux veneer stone and precast concrete has exploded recently, and now offers incredibly realistic products that are very user friendly to install. These products have been engineered to allow installers with basic installation skills to produce a structure that would typically require a stone artisan to create. Although lacking the true authenticity stone or brick can provide, they certainly have their spot in the marketplace and allow many homeowners a fully functional outdoor living space.

It is often a great idea to consult a design professional to fully capitalize on the potential of your property and material selection.

Be sure to review local zoning ordinances before starting a vertical landscape project, as they are often subject to local ordinances.

Building vertical in the landscape is a very rewarding process. Not only can it extend the seasons through incorporating the element of fire, it can bring friends and family together outdoors to create lasting memories. Be sure to review local zoning ordinances before starting a vertical landscape project, as they are often subject to local ordinances.

It is often a great idea to consult a design professional to fully capitalize on the potential of your property and material selection. They can often provide a realistic sketch of their vision for your property and allow changes to be made before a shovel is put in the ground. A qualified installer is a must for vertical landscape projects, as gravity, frost, soil composition, etc., must be understood in order for the structure to last for many years to come. □

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