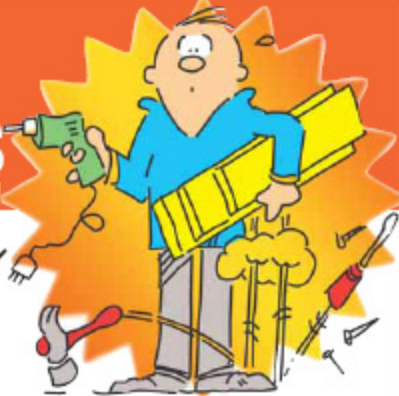


# Eric's tips for tenants



## Laying a patio



Although we are still in the depths of winter, its not too early to start thinking about your spring project for your garden.

How about creating a seating area for those hot summer evenings.

One of the easiest and most practical ways of doing so is by laying a patio constructed of flagstones.

A patio is a useful feature to any garden with a variety of suitable paving available in all colours, shapes and sizes.

A little care is required when siting and constructing. A sunny position is most favoured, usually near to the house.

Draw a plan to calculate how many flagstones will be required. Your local builder's merchant will be able to advise and should have a good selection. He will also arrange delivery.

After deciding on position, size and colour of flagstones you are ready to go.

### Good patios need good foundations.

Begin by marking out the site, with pegs and builders line, allowing a slight fall for drainage. The depth should be the thickness of the flagstone plus 1.5 inch thickness of concrete plus 4 inch for hard-core. The base should be compacted using a "compactor" you can hire these from your local hire shop.

The flagstones can be laid on mortar mix 1-part cement, 5- parts sharp sand. Use a trowel to spread mortar to a uniform thickness. Place flagstone and tamp gently with a rubber mallet until level, continue with the next allowing 0.25inch gap and check with a spirit level. Continue until complete. After allowing mortar to set, usually two or three days, fill the joints with an almost dry mortar mix, keeping off the flagstone surface to avoid staining.

### Patio Planters and Containers

An easy way to brighten up your patio or any part of your garden is by planting in containers. They can also be used to conceal unsightly drain covers. A tub placed near the front door can make a fragrant and colourful welcome.

Almost any plant can be put in a container but avoid using very tall ones also plants that require boggy conditions should not be put in containers.

A huge variety of container are sold by garden centres, in all shapes and sizes, made in Terracotta, Aluminium, Zinc, Teak, Softwood, Concrete, and Plastic.

Almost anything can be used or adapted to hold plants, even old chimney pots look effective. Old coal scuttles, sinks, or cattle troughs can be utilised and have become very fashionable. Oak barrels sawn in half make excellent patio planters.

Select containers to suit your plants, for instance Alpines thrive in a shallow tray or trough. Plants such as small shrubs and dwarf conifers require deeper tabs.

Plan where you want to place your containers on the patio, once they are filled with soil and plants, they become very heavy to move. Remember space is required all around for watering and tending the plants.

When planting containers, begin by placing broken crocks over the drainage holes, then add drainage material, to about a quarter of the containers depth, coarse gravel or larger stone can be used.

Next add the planting material, potting compost is best, but good garden soil is an alternative, mixed first with peat and then fertilizer.

With a trowel begin planting, put the tallest plants in the centre of the tub first and continue placing smaller plants around until filled.

When your tubs and containers are filled remember to add a high potash fertilizer weekly to feed your plants and keep them in good condition. Also water frequently even if it rains, still use the hose at least two or three times a week to prevent drying out. Always water in the evening or early morning and do not over water.

Finally also don't forget that permissions may be required for your patio.

Please contact your local Housing Impact Officer who will be pleased to advise you on how to apply.

