

# Leading you up the garden path

Stepping off last week's verandah onto the garden, we now focus on what's taking place underfoot. No matter how small a garden space or in what shape, a pathway of some nature is an inevitable feature. Pathways serve many purposes. Other than the basic function of connecting various parts of the garden, they may be used as a means to define space or to subdivide a garden in terms of planting materials, species, colour or function. Pathways are often widened to merely create a hard surface on which to place a garden bench. In the history of landscape design pathways have been of various shapes and materials. The formal gardens of Western Europe and Mughal India used straight, sym-

metrical lines, which were the outcome of conscious design parameters. In contrast tropical Asian gardens and those in the Japanese style adopt nature's free forms in meandering profiles.

Garden paths should ideally be 5'-0" wide and sufficiently comfortable for two persons to cross each other in opposite directions. The width may increase in direct proportion to the number of simultaneous users or if any form of vehicular traffic has to traverse the pathway. Different paving materials should be used to indicate different usage of areas and as direction indicators. Paving surfaces should not be slippery, be resistant to erosion and have a reasonable life expectancy. To ensure that pathways retain their laid level despite



constantly damp subsoil and their vulnerability to get uprooted by adjacent vegetation, the sub-grade should be compacted and the paving materials laid on a sub-base of concrete. Tight, unfilled joints are only possible with units of regular size and shape such as interlocking paves. Joints between brick and natural stone are best filled with 1:3 cement or lime mortar. If grass or ground cover between joints is to be encouraged, then 2" wide joints must be filled with a mixture of topsoil, sand and natural fertilisers. All pathways should be laid to a slight gradient to prevent water stagnation and the edges finished permanently to prevent erosion.

The most inexpensive pathways are lined with rough Shahbad or Cuddapah slabs. To make them appear less severe, grass grown in the joints makes an attractive pattern. Wire cut bricks, refractory blocks and terra-cotta tiles make attractive durable surfaces that look better when weathered. Mosaic made of waste ceramic tiles or marble chips laid in white cement are other options for treating the surface. Newly introduced in the local market are cement paves and tiles of various patterns, colour and textures. The

cost may vary from Rs.10 to Rs.70 per square feet.

Garden paths illuminated by low-level lighting bollards look attractive at night. Rather than wiring them through a conduit, an underground-insulated cable is more expensive but is a long lasting investment. Lights are ideally mounted 2'-0" higher than the surface of the pathway to cast even illumination that is not hurtful to the eye.

Various garden features can also punctuate pathways. A pergola for a creeper, a gazebo or a small pavilion made out of cast iron and wood make attractive centres of focus in a pathway. Garden sculptures, birdbaths, sundials and fountains are other ways of punctuating a garden path. So lay out your garden with care and let the pathway lead the eyes to every part of this naturally blissful corner of your home.



**Yeshwant Ramamurthy is a consulting architect. Please send your queries with detailed drawings to [property\\_times@indiatimes.com](mailto:property_times@indiatimes.com)**