

LAY-IN-A-DAY PATH

Modernise your garden with a low-cost and easy-install **GRAVEL WALKWAY**

MAKE A STATEMENT

Line a pea gravel path with boldly-coloured planters topped with foliage plants for texture, and lush underplanting for a striking and contrasting effect.



WORDS: CAROLINE DAVIS PHOTO: DANIEL KEELEY/WWW.DKDESIGNOUTDOOR.CO.UK

pleasing on the eye and very easy to lay and maintain, a gravel path is the simplest and most cost-effective solution to creating an interesting feature walkway in your garden. Decorative stone like this is small in size but big in impact, and an easy way to break up a space and modernise it.

With the minimum of tools and effort, you can lay a path in a day, revamping your plot quickly. All you need is some gravel, weed-suppressing membrane and edging of your choice. Edging can be 'soft' ie plants or 'hard' ie bricks, wood, slate, concrete, natural stone, plastic, rubber or steel.

Aftercare involves simply freshening up the path by raking it, and topping it up with more gravel when required, or even adding a contrasting shade for a more interesting look.

There are lots of gravel types and sizes – choose from creamy-buff limestone chippings to dramatic blue-grey or green-hued slate, rich

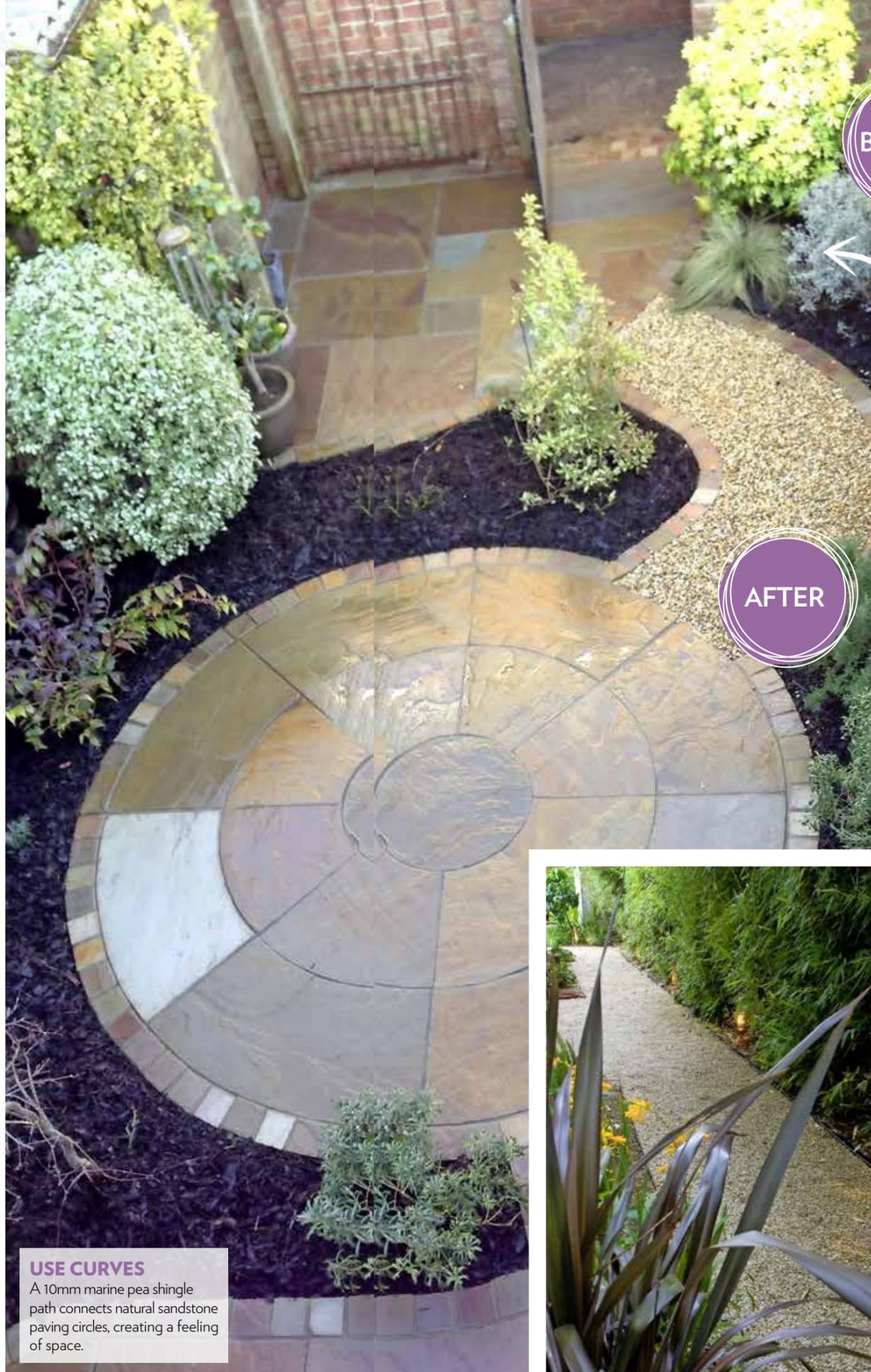
red granite to warm golden weathered flint, and multi-toned marine or river gravel.

Before you decide whether you want a straight or curved path, and what colour gravel to choose, look at your garden as a whole. Bear in mind that wet gravel takes on a darker shade than dry gravel, so choose a type and colour you like in both states, that will look good whatever the weather. Some aggregate outlets showcase sample boxes in-store so you can see what the stones look like, while others sell individual samples and sample boxes (such as www.stonewarehouse.co.uk)

Saving money on a gravel path rather than spending on more expensive options, such as slate, stone or concrete slabs, means you'll have more cash in hand to splash on plants and other garden features, so it's a win-win option. For example, factor in a couple of statement trees in pots, such as olives, to mark the start of your path and a stylish bench at the end so the path has a destination.

USE CURVES

A 10mm marine pea shingle path connects natural sandstone paving circles, creating a feeling of space.



BEFORE

AFTER

▼ ADD STYLE
Dense bamboo creates a tall green foil for this straight 10mm golden pea gravel path while evergreen phormium and yellow crocosmia brighten up the opposite border. Metal edging, along with subtle lighting for evenings, completes the sophisticated look.

PHOTO: PAUL BENTLEY/WWW.THELANDSCAPEGARDENER.CO.UK

Colour your path

COOL Amber Pearl Decorative Stone comes in carry bags (covers 0.3m²) or a large delivered bag that will cover 9.6m² at 3cm thick. **£6.42** or **£251** www.diy.com



WARM Wickes 10mm gravel pea shingle looks equally good dry or wet. A 25kg carry bag covers 1m x 40cm at 5cm deep **£3.09** www.wickes.co.uk



BRIGHT Golden Corn gravel comes in 10mm or 14mm. From **£77** for 200kg of 10mm, **£79** for 14mm. Covers roughly 3m². www.stonewarehouse.co.uk



ROSY Cheshire Pink gravel is a 14mm mix of pink, lilac, brown and white flecks. From **£87.54** for 850kg delivered. Covers roughly 3m². www.decorativeaggregates.com



PHOTO: IVE HAUGELAND/WWW.SHADESOFGREEN.LA.COM

TURN OVER TO SEE HOW TO LAY A GRAVEL PATH

How to create a 5m (16ft) long path...



1

DIG OUT YOUR PATH

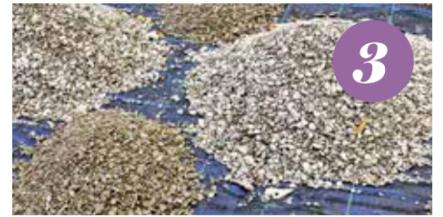
Mark out the length and shape of your path with wooden pegs and string, chalk spray paint, or hosepipe. Then dig out the path to a depth of about 6cm (2½in).



2

LAY WEED MEMBRANE

Roll out the weed control fabric and trim to fit the path with sharp, heavy-duty scissors. If you need to overlap the fabric, do so by at least 10cm (4in).



3

PUT DOWN THE GRAVEL

Pour gravel to fill the path. If using two types or colours, put one of each in a pile next to each other, so it's easy to mix when raked out.



4

RAKE THE SURFACE LEVEL

Rake the gravel level. You may need to add more after a few weeks when the path has settled and the surface has dropped a little.

WHAT IT COST

16 x 25kg bags gravel pea shingle **£34.44**
www.wickes.co.uk
 1 roll GroundTex membrane, from **£19.95**
www.groundcoversolutions.co.uk
TOTAL £54.39
 Time taken: **8 hours**

QUICK AND EASY
 Gravel is a low-maintenance yet attractive way to add texture to paths



SOFTEN THE EDGES

Letting plants spill over the edges of a gravel path helps soften them and contain the gravel.



BRIGHTEN UP A SHADY AREA

Pastel coloured gravels with dark edging and zesty plants in different shades add contrast and the illusion of light.

TUMBLE PLANTS

Soft edging with alpines on a tiered path creates an all-year-round waterfall effect.

TIP Smaller sized gravel is easier to walk on than larger pebbles, but go too small and your feet will sink in

To be practical, a path needs to be wide enough for two people to walk side by side so, width-wise allow for at least 60cm (2ft), and 1.2m (4ft) if using soft edging as plants will spill onto the walkway.

Also consider how easy it will be to walk on. Small gravel is easier to negotiate than large stones, but too small and you'll sink into it. Size-wise, aim for no smaller than 10mm and no larger than 14mm. Depth-wise, it needs to be thick enough to prevent bald patches – about 5cm (2in) is usually just right.

Gravel laid on sloping paths will gradually creep down, due to rainfall, footfall and its own weight, so you'll need to rake it back in place when necessary. If the path abuts lawns, check the grass for stray stones before mowing to prevent blades throwing them up and catching you or causing damage to something else, such as windows.

Finding out how much gravel you will need is easy. Many suppliers have calculation guides on their websites and you simply type in the path's length, width and gravel depth for an instant

quantity, for example at www.stonewarehouse.co.uk/tools/calculator

For minimum maintenance after laying, it pays to ensure you put in a good base course first by levelling the ground then laying a layer of good quality hard-wearing, weed-suppressing membrane, such as tear-resistant polypropylene GroundTex heavy duty 100g ground cover membrane (2 x 10m/6ft 6in x 33ft, £19.95 from www.groundcoversolutions.co.uk). This stops weeds growing through by blocking out light, while allowing rainwater to soak away through it. Laying a double layer ensures a longer-lasting weed suppressant.

Before you lay the membrane, remove any weeds, roots and stones from the area. For tough, persistent and invasive weeds, such as docks, nettles and dandelions, use weedkiller first to ensure you clear the base area completely. Make sure the membrane goes right up to the edging, then you won't get weeds popping up along the sides. Good ground preparation now will prolong the life of your membrane.

PHOTO: LISA COX/LISACOXDESIGNS.CO.UK

PHOTO: WWW.STONEWAREHOUSE.CO.UK

PHOTO: BRIGIT BRUNAR/JOHN STEUERNAGEL/WWW.SCULPTGARDENS.COM