How To Lay A Patio

So you've read all the gardening magazines, selected your materials and now you're ready to lay the patio…….well don't worry because we're here to make your job easier!

Start with a plan, sketch out the house and draw in the patio (graph paper or a scale rule helps), then dimension it. When you order your paving this will give an estimated square meterage too.

Now transfer your plan to the ground using wooden pegs and a string line. This is the point where any last minute changes to the design are made. Consider where the patio will finish, will any cuts be necessary? How will you finish the edge? Thought given now will pay dividends later!
Dig out any turf, plants or existing paving to a depth of 15cm, this should make allowance for paving, mortar and base material. Remember current regulations state any finished levels are to be , at least,150mm below D.P.C.
A woven membrane can be laid at this point to control weed growth, although not essential, some people like the idea of ensuring no plant growth through the paving and cutting down on future maintenance. Plastic is not suitable for this type of use, look for a woven membrane.
The next step is to back fill with 7-10cm of good hardcore or MOT type 1 then compact it well, a whacker plate is ideal for this and provides a really solid base to work from.
Start up your cement mixer and work up a mortar of 4 parts sharp sand and 1 part cement with just

enough water to give a stiff mix. Working from your starting point lay a bed 50-70mm deep covering enough of an area to accommodate your first slab with about 100mm over. Ripple the surface with your trowel and carefully lay the first slab, tap down with the rubber mallet ensuring a full bed is maintained and check level/fall.
Lets just take a moment here to consider levels, water will only run one way……downhill! The last thing you want is for water to run off your newly laid patio *towards* your house, so pay careful attention to that first slab and make sure it slopes away from the house, a fall of 25mm in 2000mm should suffice.
Now you're happy with the fall, check that the slab is level using a long, straight piece of timber and a spirit level..
Repeat this procedure for the next slab, paying attention to your string lines and pattern as you go. It's useful to have some pieces of 10mmx10mm timber, these can be used to give even spacing for pointing later.
Keep going until your mortar is used up, then stand back and LOOK! Is the pattern running well? levels ok? falls in the correct line? If yes, then well done! It's time to mix some more and carry on with the slab laying, so keep up your good work and the job will be finished before you know it.
Have a final visual check, make sure there's no mortar on the paving, clean your tools and have a well deserved drink!

POINTING

This can be the downfall of any well laid patio. There are several options available, the first is to point as you go. This involves "buttering" the edges of the slabs as you lay them, then lightly pushing against the previously laid slab. Don't use too much mortar and at no time allow any on the surface of the paving.
The area able to be laid in one go is restricted using this method, as access is needed for each joint and you can't walk on freshly laid paving! Allow the mortar joint to "go off", not set, remove any excess, then compact the joint using a pointing tool. Lightly brush the laid area when dry, then continue tomorrow.

There is another route which is much more hi-tech. This involves a product from F E B that is high strength and, more importantly, cement free. Marketed under the name of "Geo Feb" it provides a fuss free method of pointing paving without the danger of staining. As with any product, read and follow the manufacturers instructions

TOOL LIST

STRING
WOODEN PEGS
RUBBER HAMMER
FLOAT/TROWEL
SPIRIT LEVEL
SPADE
TAPE MEASURE
CEMENT MIXER

VIBRATING PLATE
WHEELBARROW
POINTING TOOL
WOODEN DOWELS (JOINT SPACERS)

N.B. This guide is for suggested domestic (non vehicular) use only.