



THE HOW-TO BOOK SHELF has been enriched by this well crafted publication written for beginning and/or intermediate stonemasons. David Reed has made available what 15 or so years of experience in different aspects of the craft (and the art) of stonework have taught him. The book is informed not only by his work experience, but by the love which he obviously feels for STONE - and for what can be accomplished with it.

"A Stone Mason's Primer" is the subtitle of the first chapter. It begins with the basics, the distinctive nomenclature of this obdurate material, and the tools and techniques that have evolved over time through working with it. Basalt and limestone, hammers and chisels, ramps and rollers, patios and walls from foundations to capstones, are all described in some detail.

Dry stone walling is fundamental to stonemasonry. The principles inherent in assembling stone without mortar, in utilizing gravity and friction as cohesive forces and, with ingenuity, weaving the material together are basic and building in this fashion is the best introduction to stonemasonry. Accordingly the first projects covered involve dry stone masonry, freestanding walls, retaining walls, benches, borders and steps.

Then the course of instruction proceeds into mortared masonry, paving and walls, both structural and veneer. As in the dry stone section the author provides many useful tips.

In the final section, "The Romance of Stone" more creative approaches to stone, including carving, both relief and three dimensional, "boulderscaping" and Japanese style gardens are introduced.

The color photographs are excellent. In some you can almost taste the stone. Included are depictions of stonework other than the author's, of stonework of other lands and other times as well. Most of the photographs are David's, but to his credit he has included many more by other photographers.

Some offer aesthetic pleasure but most are instructive. For instance, the photo on the right illustrates an effective way to trim flagstone. The stone has been shocked along the desired line, then "nibbled" away until the line is reached. To attempt to do this all at once could well have an unintended result.

The picture below is included here because it addresses one of my pet peeves. When building a wall on sloping ground, many stonemasons, even experienced stonemasons, instead of keeping the courses horizontal and stepping the base stones and the top of the wall, will slope the wall and its courses to match the slope of the ground, so the wall seems to be sliding downhill. Please don't do that. The photo shows the plywood that the waller has

put down to protect the surface of the driveway and the landscaping cloth that prevents loose soil from infiltrating the wall.

Also instructive is the lower half of the photograph on the book cover which offers two examples of running joints.

"A Stone Mason's Primer", is the subtitle of the first chapter, but in a way the entire book is a stonemason's primer. With information and inspiring examples it primes the reader, particularly the novice or novice-to-be, and prepares him or her get on with it. Everything one needs to know to begin is here. Experience will provide further instruction (and a few blue fingernails), and more information can be had, if sought, from observation, from more experienced practioners of the craft, and from other books. □

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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[STONE FOUNDATION HOME PAGE](#)

David, a Stone Foundation member, is the author of another Lark Book, "The Art and Craft of Stonescaping".

