

LANDSCAPE LIFESTYLES

Tips & Tools For Landscape Professionals

Issue 5



Inside:

- Contractor Gets Record Growth in 2004
- Jump Start Your Business in 2005 with Allan Block
- Compaction - What Every Contractor Must Know



AB Photo Contest Winner

2004 1st Place Winner
 Lawncraft Corp
 Wayzata, Minnesota
 Owner, Fred Johnson



THE PROJECT

The homeowners wanted a totally new outdoor entertainment area that would take advantage of the beautiful pond and wooded areas surrounding their backyard. They envisioned a swimming pool, large patio deck and an outdoor kitchen incorporated into the existing architecture of their property. The finished project included:

- 1,950 sq ft (181 m²) of AB Abbey Blend Walls using the Europa Collection.
- AB Courtyard wall framing the pool area.
- 30 ft (9 m) long terraced flower garden lining the pathway.

THE LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

Lawncraft's owner Fred Johnson has built a solid reputation since starting the business in 1989. His two crews are focused on high end "creative landscaping" and have built most of their retaining walls with natural stone and boulders.

THE DESIGN - BUILD PROCESS

Lawncraft designed the entire project including the pool and concrete pool deck, lighting, gas cook top and heat lamps. Fred Johnson states, *"The project was intense. It required ongoing project management and update meetings with the owner. We brainstormed new ideas and adjusted the project throughout the entire process."* Construction was completed within just 5 weeks.

ALLAN BLOCK - ON THE JOB

The homeowners wanted a product that matched the European look of their home so they chose Allan Block's Europa Collection.

THE RESULTS

The homeowners are delighted with the project and are planning to complete an outdoor bar in 2005 using AB Courtyard posts. Landscaper Fred Johnson is happy too, he states *"This project has given my business a big boost. I've never been much of a block guy, but this project worked out really well. I'm happy the homeowners chose Allan Block."*

THE NUMBERS

Lawncraft Man hours	1,200+
AB Europa Block	1,950 sq. ft. (181 m ²)
AB Geogrid	1,000+ sq. ft. (93 m ²)
AB Courtyard	300+ sq. ft. (28 m ²)



"The four block shapes used in the Abbey Blend pattern provided the ease of using a retaining wall block - and - it has the look of natural stone."

New AB Manuals Guaranteed to

"The best installation manual I've seen, a great reference for technical questions"

- Scott Ruble, Estes Grounds Maintenance

Not every landscape tool has a handle or a steering wheel. Some tools, like the new **AB Design Manual** and **AB Installation Guide**, can improve your brain power rather than muscle power. Just like a new Bobcat, these new literature tools from Allan Block can also make your work easier, more productive, and more profitable.

The new **AB Design Manual** gives landscape professionals detailed information on the design and construction of larger scale Allan Block retaining walls. In addition, the new **AB Installation Guide** provides landscape contractors everything they need to know about building both professional-grade landscape walls and large-scale commercial retaining walls.

Together, these manuals set a new standard in education on design and installation of retaining walls. See your local Allan Block professional for a printed copy, or visit our web site at allanblock.com to download a .pdf file you can print at your office or home.



Contractor Builds AB Walls and Record Growth in 2004!

2004 was a good year for Scott Ruble, President of Estes Grounds Maintenance Inc. His landscaping and lawn maintenance company has seen steady growth since he took over the business in the mid 1990s, but 2004 brought some exciting new changes. We heard about Estes's strong growth and thought it might make an interesting story for this newsletter. So we caught up with Scott in mid-December for a phone interview.

Scott, What's been the biggest reason for your growth the last 12 months?

"It's two things really. Number one is the Allan Block Certification training my foremen and I did last spring. Although we had installed a couple of AB jobs prior to the training, we learned several new things. I was very impressed with the quality of the program. The handbook they provided is a great reference guide for technical questions."

How has AB Certification helped your business?

"It's given us credibility and confidence. Being able to say - 'I know I can build this wall, we have been certified by the product manufacturer' - goes a long way with landscape architects and engineers. There have been a few wall failures in this market that have raised everyone's awareness about the need to build walls correctly. AB Certification provided us the skills and knowledge to build with confidence."

So, training's number one, what's the second reason your AB business has skyrocketed?

"I'd boil it down to experience. Our crews have gotten really good at installing Allan Block walls, and we're getting calls from general contractors and developers looking for that experience."

How did your AB installation crews ramp up so quickly?

"Allan Block is much more installer friendly than the other products we had been using. The hollow core blocks are easier to work with and there is less cutting involved. Using a dead blow hammer to set base blocks, turn corners and make minor adjustments to the wall is much easier with AB than with other blocks." We've installed a dozen AB walls over the last eighteen months and now our guys don't like to work with anything else.

How is it that general contractors and developers are calling you about Allan Block?

"We've built our reputation and our business on strong relationships with general contractors. The first Allan Block job we did was a 1,400 sq. ft (130 m²) Ashlar Blend wall. The GC, who we've done work for in the past, wanted us to do the project. Although it was our first Allan Block wall - and a multi-block wall at that - it was a "piece of cake". There are a few little tricks you need to know when installing the blended or patterned walls, but the local Allan Block rep was a great help on-site. Now, we're working on a 13,000 sq. ft (1,208 m²) AB wall for the same developer."



Help You Build Better Walls

"Landscapers use it as a selling tool, it gives them the knowledge to talk with customers as an expert."

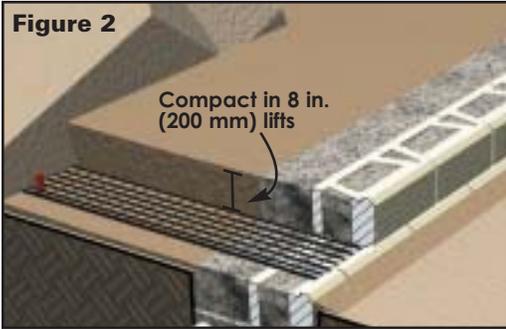
Landscape contractor Clay Henry of Beavertown Block Co.

Soils Compaction - What Every Contractor Must Know

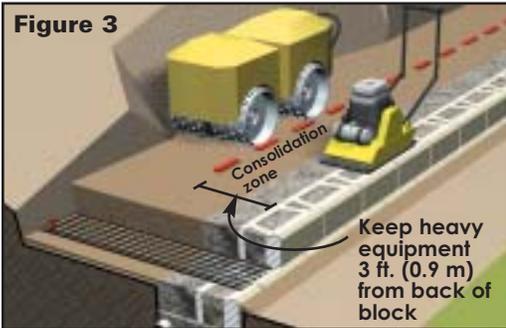
Excerpt from the new Allan Block Installation Guide

Proper placement and compaction of infill soils behind a retaining wall is critical. Foundation and infill soils require compaction to 95% of "Standard Proctor," or 95% of the soil's maximum density. Local geotechnical and soils engineers are trained to test and measure compaction densities. On-site testing ensures that the structure will perform as designed.

The most important step in achieving proper compaction is placing and



Compact in 8 in. (200 mm) lifts.



Keep heavy equipment away from the back of the block.



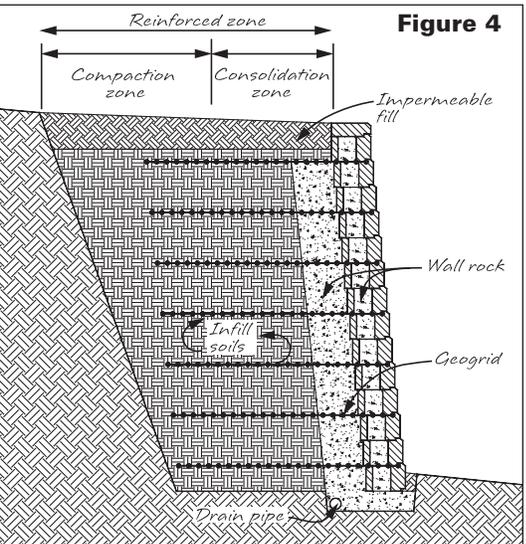
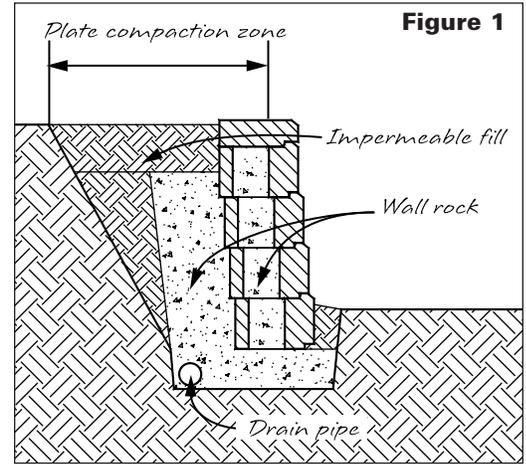
compacting the soil in "lifts" or layers. Compacting in lifts of 8 in. (200 mm) or less with the proper equipment and moisture content, will provide the necessary compaction. Compaction in lifts that exceed 8 in. (200 mm) will result in less than adequate soil strength. **Always backfill and compact after each course of 8 in. (200 mm) Allan Block is placed (figure 2).**

Compaction equipment must be sized according to the type of material being compacted and the proximity to the "Consolidation Zone" (figure 4). The Consolidation Zone runs from the back of the block back 3 ft. (0.9 m) into the infill soil. **Only walk-behind mechanical plate compactors shall be used within the consolidation zone.**

For taller walls where geogrid reinforcement is used, larger compaction equipment is required in the "Reinforcement Zone" but not in the Consolidation Zone. (figure 4). Consult with a local equipment supplier to ensure that proper compaction equipment is used.

When compacting in the Consolidation Zone, a minimum of two passes with a walk behind plate compactor are required. Start compacting directly on top of the block and compact in paths that run parallel with the wall - to approximately 3 ft (0.9 m) behind the block.

Some applications require higher levels of compaction in the Consolidation Zone, for example, when additional walls or structures are located within 3 ft (0.9 m) of the back of the wall. Higher levels of compaction can be achieved by decreasing the lifts to 4 in. (100 mm). Compacting in smaller lifts will achieve higher compaction levels and will not place lateral loads on the wall facing. Higher compaction levels reduce settlement over time.



Jumpstart Your Business in 2005 - Get AB Certified

The key to building both a strong business and strong walls in 2005 is AB Certification by your local Allan Block professional. The AB Contractor Certification Program gives you essential information for building top-quality walls. You'll learn how to:

Build Strong Walls

- Basic design principles that dictate the right way to build your wall
- How to avoid the most common mistakes contractors make when building segmental retaining walls.
- Time saving methods for estimating block and material quantities
- How to save time and money by combining AB walls and AB geogrid
- And more!

Build Your Business

- Improved Productivity and Profitability. You'll learn valuable tips on how to save time while building top-quality walls.
- More Customers and More Profits - Earning your AB certification puts you in direct line for project leads and business referrals.
- More Confidence & Peace of Mind - Knowledge is power! AB certification means you can build with confidence and rest assured that the AB walls you build will look as great 10 and 20 years from now as they do today.
- Increased Customer Satisfaction & Referrals. Quality projects mean happy customers who tell their friends and neighbors how great your work is.



To find out about AB Contractor Certification training scheduled in your area, contact your local Allan Block professional, or visit allanblock.com.

Landscape Professionals – Give Yourself a Pat on the Back!

NEW Announcing the AB Rewards Program

New in 2005, the AB Rewards Program recognizes Landscape Companies dedicated to installing Allan Block walls. Companies that install Allan Block retaining walls will receive a Rewards Kit containing valuable AB merchandise and business tools.

Three Reward Levels*

- **BRONZE:** Install one AB wall greater than 200 sq. ft. (18.6 m²)
- **SILVER:** Install a total of 5 AB walls in 2005
- **GOLD:** Install a total of 25,000 sq. ft. (2,500 m²) or 10 AB projects in 2005

Three Reward Kits*

- **BRONZE:** AB T-shirts, estimating wheels and sales tools
- **SILVER:** AB hats, denim shirts and sales tools
- **GOLD:** Custom AB leather jackets and sales tools



* Companies must have at least one AB Certified Contractor working on the projects submitted for the Rewards Program in order to receive Reward Kits. Certain conditions apply. See your local Allan Block professional or allanblock.com for details.

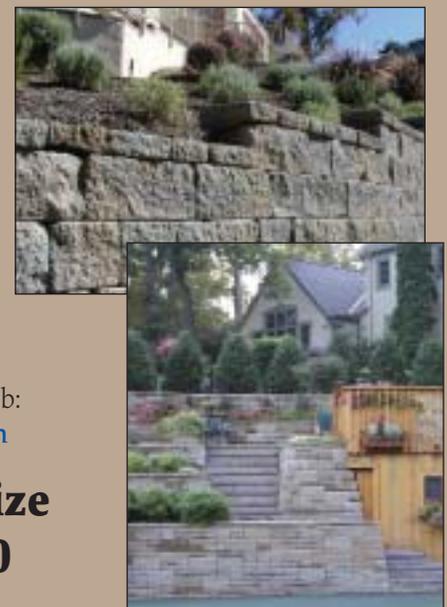
AB Photo Contest 2005

Attention Landscape Professionals; show off the new outdoor living spaces you create. Send us a photograph of your completed Allan Block project and you could win \$1,000 for the top project of 2005.

We will be featuring successful projects in newsletters, advertising and promotions throughout the year. Share your design, build your business and get national recognition for your work!

Full details on the web:
www.allanblock.com

First Prize
\$1,000





Great Ideas and Resources for Landscape Professionals

Missed any of the earlier issues of Landscape Lifestyles?

You can still access all of the project profiles, installation tips and valuable information on-line at allanblock.com. Here is a sample of topics covered in previous newsletters:

- Outdoor living trends
- How to build steps into a retaining wall
- Designing a backyard oasis
- New design elements in landscaping
- How to build patterned walls
- Building walls with AB reinforcement grid
- Build strong walls
- SRWs versus other wall products



Sign up to get **LANDSCAPE LIFESTYLES** by e-mail.

To receive the AB Landscape Lifestyles Newsletter by e-mail each quarter, sign up online at www.allanblock.com.

Estimating and Ordering are a Snap!

Estimating AB block and grid materials couldn't be easier. Allan Block offers both an estimating software program and a laminated calculator wheel for quickly estimating all the materials needed to build a landscape wall up to 6 feet high (1.8 m). Block, AB Reinforcement Grid, base rock and backfill materials, drain tile and capstones are all easily calculated. Visit our web site at www.allanblock.com or your local AB Professional for more information.



Landscape Design CD - Complete Design & Installation Information

For professional landscape ideas and inspiration, sign up to receive Allan Block's Landscape Design CD at www.allanblock.com. Packed with information to help you plan, design and build landscape walls up to 6 feet high (1.8 m), this CD includes product specifications, installation guidelines and a valuable material estimating program.

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