

Backyard Terrace Transformation Orion Township, Michigan

When Darren Yanke, owner and operator of Yanke's Design & Construction, surveyed the back yard of the Orion Township residence to write up a bid, he saw wooden retaining walls, stairs and a deck that were old, rotting, and on the verge of failing. At the same time, in his mind's eye he saw beautiful and long-lasting concrete block walls, terraces, grand stairway and multilevel patios he could create with a concrete masonry wall system and pavers.

Yanke (pronounced like the New York Major League Baseball team) was awarded the job. He got construction permits and performed demolition and cleanup. His crew built the engineered walls, staircase and patios as well as the finishing touches: plant installation, grading, sod and final cleanup. Replacing the old structures is a landscape of warm-toned masonry lines that complement the house exterior, flowers, foliage, and inviting patio areas that rise in parallel terraces from the water's edge. Because the site had a twenty-foot grade change in the relatively short distance between the lake and the far edge of the back yard, and the soil in the area required a design that addressed soil stability, Yanke knew this project required a structural wall product and geogrid reinforcement. That meant he would use his go-to wall, the Keystone Compac-Hewnstone, manufactured by Fendt Builder's Supply, Farmington Hills, Michigan.

Yanke is a long-time fan of Keystone products and in particular, the Keystone Compac-Hewnstone wall system. "The look is simple yet timeless," he explains. "It fits a lot of my applications because it has a face that projects warmth and elegance, and is perfect for jobs where you need a structural wall with staying power but not the rugged, cold, industrial look typical of that type of wall block. And it's very competitively priced."

The Keystone Compac unit is popular among specifiers for its aesthetics, cost-saving versatility and proven performance in the field. It is a pinned system that uses 1/2" x 5 1/4" fiberglass alignment pins. The system allows for positive connections with reinforcement to build taller engineered walls. Ease of installation is another benefit of the Keystone Compac unit. Its lighter weight and shorter tail design make it easier to handle than other structural wall systems. The unit shape enables the tight radius curves found in this project design. Installation options include near-vertical or battered setbacks.

"This wall is a winner," Yanke remarked. "I've used it on many sites. In the 38 years I've been a landscape designer and builder, doing every type of wall, I like to use products that look like they are part of nature, like they belong where they've been built. I resist products that are trendy. The Compac-Hewnstone is that classic, high-performing wall that keeps bringing in the business."

Owner: Private Residence

Contractor: Yanke's Design & Construction

Keystone Producer: Fendt Builders Supply

Technical Description:

- Keystone Compac® III - Hewnstone
- Number of Walls: 8
- Total Wall Area: 2,800 s.f.
- Maximum Height: 8 ft.

Installation: June 2016

