Ending Your Wall with Step Downs

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Lighting brings new possibilities to any landscape. Add a dramatic look with ground mounted lighting or illuminate stairways and pathways with recessed lighting. Allan Block walls with decorative lighting fixtures provide not only a distinctive design, but add safety and security to the landscape.

Allan Block’s patented hollow core design makes it easy to add lighting into any wall. Simply run the wiring directly behind the AB blocks (follow local electrical codes) to the light locations. Use a masonry saw to cut out sections of the block to accommodate the lighting fixture and run the wiring through the blocks out to the light fixture.

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IC Lights LLC
ICLightsInc.com

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• Backyard Transformation Washes Away Site Problems
• Water Management - The War on Water
• Ending Walls - Step Downs
• Finishing Touches - Lighting Options
Do you have standing water or muddy places in your lawn or yard? A slope on your property that is directing rain toward a home or building, or maybe a path for water to flow down a driveway with standing water every time it rains? If any of these scenarios sound familiar, then you have a water management problem. Adding a retaining wall and proper drainage options to your project is your solution.

Water is an important resource, but in the wrong places can be a very destructive force. In fact, 90% of all wall failures are caused by improper water management. This is why it is important to consider where the water on your project goes both during and after your retaining wall is completed.

Fighting the War on Water

Before we can begin to wage a war against water on a project, we must first determine the type of water present. Only then can we develop the solutions available to fight the problem. There are two basic types of water found on any given landscape project.

• Surface Water
• groundwater

Surface Water

Surface water can be defined as a water source above the ground. These water sources will need to be identified and taken into account during the design of the wall. Slopes above the wall, driveways, parking lots, roof downspouts, irrigation systems and outdoor fountains are all examples of surface water.

Groundwater

Groundwater can be defined as water that occurs within the soil. Sources include surface water infiltration, water table fluctuation and water moving above the layers of permeable soils. Groundwater movement must be managed before encountering the wall structure, including the soils behind the wall. Typically this type of water is not an issue on most projects, however, if during the excavation process you find water in your trench, be sure to seek help from a local engineer to ensure that the groundwater has been accounted for in your design.

Now that we know what types of water there are we can determine how best to manage them. There are three main ways to address the water on a site:

• Site Grading
• Wall Rock Zone
• Chimney & Blanket Drains

The War on Water

The main objective in any wall project where water is an issue is to direct the water away from the minimal soil area. Surface run-off is typically handled by directing the water somewhere else, creating a route for the water to exit the yard or grading the site so that the normal flow of water is away from the back of the wall.

Site Grading

The wall rock zone is comprised of a clean well-graded gravel material that provides many positives to the design and function of your retaining wall. Its primary function would be to provide a quality material for compaction in and around the footing. Also, it aids in the connection with the geogrid and stone drain that transitions to the core block.

One of its secondary functions would be to provide drainage into an area for any incidental water that may flow onto the wall. The wall rock provides an area behind the block and in the core where incidental water can easily drain through the toe drain and keep any hydrostatic pressure from building up behind the wall.

These are an important part of managing any incidental water. All drains need to be either vented to daylight or attached to an underground drainage system.

Wall Rock Zone

The wall rock zone was placed at the back of the house and wrapped around the pool. Landscaping was added to provide the perfect privacy solution.

The AB Courtyard wall was placed at the back of the house and wrapped around the pool. Landscaping was added to provide the perfect privacy solution.

The Abingdon Collection from All-Brix was chosen to build the headwall. The Abingdon Collection was chosen due to its ability to provide a clean stone beneath the wall and a column of clean stone for drainage. The Abingdon Collection is another line of defense in our war with water. This drain consists of a blanket of clean stone that can enter the drain pipe and make its way away from the wall.

A chimney or blanket drain is another line of defense in our war with water. This drain consists of a blanket of clean stone beneath the wall and a column of clean stone behind the geogrid reinforcing structure. This allows the water to migrate downward toward the base of the wall where it can enter the drain pipe and make its way away from the wall.

Now that we know what types of water there are and the different ways we can combat them, we can better prepare for the water that will inevitably be present on the project site. As with any project, make sure you consult with your local engineer to ensure the water is accounted for within the design. Water will be directing and the project will be the victor.
The Cleghern family from Tennessee Ridge, Tennessee were homeowners with a backyard problem that needed a solution. While their yard already had a pool, there really was not enough space around it to relax and entertain. This was due in part to the large sloping hill at the back of their property. The hillside was also creating a serious flooding issue as well. The Cleghern’s yard was transformed from a washout and confined space with no usable space in the yard to an open and inviting outdoor living space that they can enjoy with family and friends.

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Washing Away Water Problems

The contractor suggested building an Allan Block retaining wall to manage the slope and increase the usable space in the yard around the pool. Drains would be installed to divert the water flow. Drains were installed within and behind the wall to divert the water flow. The All Courted wall was placed at the back of the house and wrapped around the yard to meet up with the retaining wall. Landscaping was added to the area to provide the perfect mixture of aesthetics and privacy while still keeping the yard feeling open and inviting.

Water Management - The War on Water

The wall rock zone is comprised of a clean well-graded gravel material that provides many positives to the design and function of your retaining wall. Its primary function is to provide a quality material for compaction in and around the facing. Also, it aids in the connection with the geogrid and sheet between block courses. One of its secondary functions would be to provide a base for any incidental water that may get onto the wall. The wall rock provides an area behind the block and in the core where incidental water can easily drop through to the toe drain and keep hydraulic pressure from building up behind the wall. The drains are an important part of managing this incidental water. All drains need to be either vented to daylight or attached to an underground drainage system.

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Now that we know what types of water there are and the different ways to combat them, we can better prepare for the water that will inevitably be present on the project site. As with any project, make sure you consult with your local engineer to ensure the water is accounted for within the design. Water will be defeated and the project will be the victor!
The homeowners really didn’t like the look of a wooden fence, the AB Courtyard Collection was recommended to create a concrete wall that would provide the perfect privacy solution. The AB Collection from Allan Block was chosen to build the hillside. The homeowners really enjoyed the look and texture of the Ashlar Blend pattern to match the feel of their home. The AB Courtyard Collection was placed on each end with step downs to follow the grade of the slope, giving them a lot more entertaining space. Drains were installed within and behind the wall to divert the flow of water. The AB Courtyard wall was placed at the back of the house and wrapped around the yard to meet up with the retaining wall. Landscaping was added to the area to provide the perfect mixture of aesthetics and privacy while still keeping the yard feeling open and inviting.

Once the project was completed, the Cleghern’s yard was transformed from a washed out and confined space with no overall design. The constructed place is now a beautiful and functional outdoor living space that they can enjoy with family and friends.

## Backyard Transformation Washes Away Water Problems

Water Management - Fighting the War on Water

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**Surface Water**

Surface water can be defined as a water source above the ground. These water sources will need to be identified and taken into account during the design of the wall. Steps above the wall, driveways, parking lots, roof downspouts, irrigation systems and outdoor faucets are all examples of surface water.

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### Site Grading

The main objective in any wall project where water is an issue is to divert the water away from the reinforced soil mass. For any given wall system to function properly, the water sub-surface should be managed before encountering the wall structure, including the soils behind the wall. Typically this type of water is not an issue on most projects, however, if during the excavation process you find water in your trench, be sure to seek help from your local engineer to ensure that the groundwater has been accounted for in your design.

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The War on Water

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There are a wide variety of lighting types to illuminate your landscape. Choose the lighting option that fits the look and feel of your landscape.

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Illuminate pathways and garden accents with a pathway light fixture.

Silhouette accent landscape features with a bullet light fixture.

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iclightsllc.live.com

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