NEW BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPING

Hardscaping & Patios

Patios, walkways, driveways, fire pits, outdoor kitchens, and stone work for New Brunswick properties

19 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

newbrunswicklandscaping.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Are permeable pavers good for NB freeze-thaw?

Permeable pavers can work well in New Brunswick's freeze-thaw cycles, but proper installation is absolutely critical for long-term success. The key is having the right base system and choosing pavers designed for our climate conditions.

Why Permeable Pavers Work in NB

The main advantage in our Maritime climate is that water drains through the system instead of pooling on top and creating ice dams. Traditional solid pavers can trap water that freezes and expands, causing heaving and cracking. Permeable systems allow water to move through the joints and base layers, reducing freeze-thaw pressure. This is particularly beneficial given our 1.2-1.5 meter frost depth and frequent winter thaw cycles.

Critical Installation Requirements

The base system makes or breaks permeable paver performance in New Brunswick. You need a minimum 12-inch base of properly graded crushed stone (typically 3/4" clear stone), with geotextile fabric underneath to prevent contamination from clay soils. The base must be compacted in lifts and have proper slope for drainage. Many installations fail because contractors skimp on base depth or use the wrong aggregate gradation.

Best Paver Types for NB

Choose concrete pavers rated for severe freeze-thaw exposure (ASTM C936 Class SX). Avoid cheap pavers that aren't freeze-thaw rated. Natural stone like granite works well but costs more. The joint material is crucial — use angular stone chips (1/8" to 1/4") rather than sand, which can wash out and clog the system over time.

Maintenance Considerations

Permeable pavers require more maintenance than solid systems. You'll need to vacuum or pressure wash the joints annually to prevent clogging from organic debris and fine particles. In coastal areas like Saint John or Moncton, salt spray can accelerate joint material breakdown. Budget for joint material replacement every 3-5 years.

When to Hire a Professional

This is definitely a job for an experienced hardscaping contractor. Improper base preparation, inadequate drainage, or wrong materials will lead to expensive failures within a few years. The contractor should understand NB's frost depth requirements and have experience with permeable systems specifically. Get references for similar projects that have survived multiple freeze-thaw cycles.

Cost Expectations

Expect to pay $25-$40 per square foot installed — about 20-30% more than traditional pavers due to the specialized base system and materials. However, the long-term performance in our climate often justifies the extra cost, especially for driveways and areas prone to ice buildup.

Need help finding a landscaper experienced with permeable paving systems? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with contractors who understand the specific requirements for our Maritime climate.

Q2

Stamped concrete vs interlocking pavers for NB?

For New Brunswick's freeze-thaw climate, interlocking pavers are generally the better long-term choice over stamped concrete. While stamped concrete costs less upfront, our Maritime winters with repeated freeze-thaw cycles cause concrete to crack and heave, leading to expensive repairs that are difficult to match.

Interlocking pavers handle NB winters much better because they're designed to move slightly with ground movement. When frost heaves the base, individual pavers can shift and resettle without cracking. If a paver does crack from ice or snow load, you can replace just that one piece rather than patching concrete. The joints between pavers also allow for better drainage, which is crucial in our high-precipitation climate.

Cost comparison for New Brunswick projects shows stamped concrete at $12-18 per square foot installed, while quality interlocking pavers run $18-30 per square foot. However, factor in that stamped concrete often needs crack repairs within 5-7 years in our climate, while properly installed pavers can last 20+ years with minimal maintenance. The base preparation is critical for both — you need 6-8 inches of compacted granular base in NB to prevent frost heaving.

Stamped concrete works best for large areas like driveways where the seamless look is important, and when installed with proper control joints and sealed annually. It's also faster to install for big projects. Choose concrete if you're in a sheltered location with good drainage and understand you'll need periodic maintenance.

Choose interlocking pavers for patios, walkways, and areas where you want long-term durability with minimal maintenance. They're ideal near the coast where salt spray can damage concrete surfaces. The variety of colors and patterns available also gives you more design flexibility than stamped concrete.

Professional installation is crucial for both options in New Brunswick. Improper base preparation leads to heaving and cracking within the first winter. A qualified hardscaping contractor will ensure proper excavation depth, granular base compaction, and drainage — essential for surviving our frost depth of 1.2-1.5 meters.

For most NB homeowners, the extra upfront cost of pavers pays off through reduced maintenance and better longevity in our challenging climate. Need help finding a qualified hardscaping contractor? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with experienced local professionals who understand our unique climate requirements.

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Q3

How much patio space do I need for furniture?

For a standard outdoor dining set (table + 4 chairs), plan for a minimum 10x10 foot patio, though 12x12 feet provides much more comfortable movement and additional seating options.

The key is allowing enough space for chairs to be pulled out and for people to walk around comfortably. A dining table typically needs 3 feet of clearance on all sides - 2 feet for the pulled-out chair and 1 foot for someone to walk behind. So a 4x6 foot table actually requires about 10x12 feet of total patio space.

Different furniture arrangements have different space requirements. A small bistro set for two people works well on an 8x8 foot patio, while a larger entertaining space with sectional seating, dining table, and a barbecue area might need 16x20 feet or more. If you're planning to include a fire pit or outdoor kitchen, add another 4-6 feet in each direction for safety clearances and traffic flow.

Consider how you'll actually use the space when planning your patio size. Many New Brunswick homeowners underestimate their needs and regret building too small. It's much more cost-effective to build the right size initially than to expand later. Think about hosting family barbecues, kids playing, or simply having room to move furniture around for different occasions.

For New Brunswick's climate, remember that we spend most of our outdoor time from May through September, so you want to maximize the usable space during our relatively short outdoor season. Consider including some covered area or planning for a future pergola, as Maritime weather can be unpredictable even in summer.

Practical planning tips: Use painter's tape or rope to outline different patio sizes in your yard and arrange your existing furniture within those boundaries. This gives you a real sense of how much space feels comfortable. Also consider the patio's relationship to your house - you'll want easy access from indoor living areas and adequate clearance from windows and doors.

When to hire a professional: While you can certainly plan the layout yourself, a landscape designer can help optimize the space for your specific yard conditions, sun patterns, and drainage requirements. For the actual patio installation, professional hardscaping ensures proper base preparation crucial for New Brunswick's freeze-thaw cycles - inadequate base depth leads to heaving and uneven surfaces within a few years.

Most homeowners are surprised how much more they enjoy a properly sized patio versus one that feels cramped. In New Brunswick's short outdoor season, having space that truly works for your lifestyle makes all the difference in how much you'll actually use and enjoy your investment.

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Q4

How deep should a paver patio base be in New Brunswick's climate?

A paver patio base in New Brunswick needs to be 12 to 16 inches deep, significantly more than what you'd see recommended in milder climates. This extra depth is critical because NB's frost line extends 1.2 to 1.5 metres below grade, and without a proper granular base, freeze-thaw cycles will heave your pavers out of alignment within the first winter or two.

The base structure should follow a specific layering approach. Start with **6 to 10 inches of compacted granular A gravel** (3/4-inch crushed stone with fines), applied and compacted in 2-inch lifts using a plate compactor. On top of that, spread **1 inch of bedding sand** (concrete sand or stone dust) screeded to a perfectly level surface. The pavers themselves sit on this sand layer. In areas with heavy clay soil — common around Fredericton and the Saint John River valley — you may want to go closer to 16 inches of base, while sandy coastal soils near Moncton or Shediac can sometimes get by with 12 inches.

Drainage is equally important in New Brunswick's climate. With annual rainfall of 1,100 to 1,200mm and spring snowmelt adding significant water, your base must shed water efficiently. Ensure the patio has a minimum slope of 1/8 inch per foot away from any structures. For patios adjacent to a house foundation, consider installing a drainage pipe along the inside edge to prevent water from pooling against the foundation wall.

One commonly overlooked detail in NB is the **choice of polymeric sand for joints**. Standard joint sand will wash out quickly with Maritime rainfall and allow weeds to establish. Polymeric sand hardens when wet, locking pavers together and preventing weed growth and ant infiltration. Budget approximately $25–30 per bag, and you'll need 1 bag per 30–40 square feet depending on joint width.

The **sub-base preparation** deserves special attention. Before adding gravel, excavate down to undisturbed soil and compact it with a plate compactor. If you hit clay, consider adding a layer of geotextile fabric between the native soil and the gravel base — this prevents clay from migrating up into the gravel and compromising drainage. In NB's river valley areas where clay soil is prevalent, this fabric layer can add years to your patio's life.

Professional patio installation in New Brunswick runs **$18 to $30 per square foot** for standard interlocking pavers, with the base preparation accounting for roughly 40–50% of the total cost. While DIY is possible for smaller patios, improper base preparation is the number one cause of patio failure in NB's climate — if you're investing $3,000 to $6,000 in a patio, hiring an experienced local installer is often worth the investment for the base work alone.

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Q5

What type of pavers handle freeze-thaw cycles best in Fredericton NB?

Concrete interlocking pavers with a minimum compressive strength of 8,000 PSI and water absorption rate below 5% handle Fredericton's freeze-thaw cycles best. Fredericton sits in zone 4b with some of NB's most extreme temperature swings — from -30C winter lows to +32C summer highs — and pavers must withstand 100+ freeze-thaw cycles per season without cracking, spalling, or flaking.

The key specification to look for is the **CSA A231.2 standard**, which is the Canadian standard for precast concrete pavers. Pavers meeting this standard have been tested for freeze-thaw resistance specific to Canadian winters. Look for products rated for **a minimum of 50 freeze-thaw cycles in the CSA test** — though quality manufacturers often exceed 150 cycles. Budget brands that barely meet the minimum standard often begin deteriorating after 3–5 Fredericton winters.

Interlocking concrete pavers outperform poured concrete and natural stone for freeze-thaw resistance because the joints between pavers allow the surface to flex slightly with ground movement. When frost heaves push the ground up, individual pavers shift and resettle rather than cracking like a rigid slab would. This is why a properly installed interlocking paver patio in Fredericton can last 25–30 years, while poured concrete patios typically develop cracks within 5–10 years.

Paver thickness matters significantly in Fredericton's climate. Choose a minimum of **60mm (approximately 2.4 inches) for walkways and patios**, and **80mm for driveways** or areas that will bear vehicle weight. Thicker pavers resist the upward force of frost heave better and are less prone to cracking under snow removal equipment. The modest price difference between 60mm and 80mm pavers is easily justified by the extended lifespan.

Natural stone pavers are an alternative, but not all stone types perform equally in Fredericton. Granite is excellent — it's dense, low-porosity, and virtually impervious to freeze-thaw damage. Limestone and sandstone are more variable — softer varieties absorb moisture that freezes and causes spalling. If choosing natural stone, select

dense varieties with documented freeze-thaw performance and expect to pay **$25 to $45 per square foot** compared to $18 to $30 for concrete pavers.

Avoid clay brick pavers for Fredericton installations unless they are specifically manufactured and rated for severe freeze-thaw exposure. Many clay pavers sold at garden centres are rated for milder climates and will flake apart within 2–3 NB winters. If you love the brick aesthetic, concrete pavers that mimic the look of clay brick are a far more durable choice. Have a local Fredericton hardscape professional assess your specific site conditions — soil type, drainage, and sun exposure all influence which paver will perform best over the long term.

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Q6

How do I prevent frost heaving in a paver walkway in New Brunswick?

Preventing frost heaving in a New Brunswick paver walkway requires a properly engineered granular base, good drainage, and careful material selection — the three factors that determine whether your walkway stays level or buckles with every spring thaw. NB's frost depth of 1.2 to 1.5 metres means the ground moves significantly every winter, and without these defences, heaving is inevitable.

The base depth is your primary defence. Excavate the walkway path to a depth of 12 to 14 inches below the finished paver surface. Fill with **compacted granular A gravel (3/4-inch crushed stone with fines)** in 2-inch lifts, compacting each lift with a plate compactor to at least 95% density. This granular base allows water to drain down and away rather than sitting beneath your pavers and freezing. The principle is simple — frost heave occurs when water in soil freezes and expands. Remove the water and you remove the heaving.

Drainage is the second critical factor. Ensure the walkway has a cross-slope of at least 2% (approximately 1/4 inch per foot) so water runs off the surface rather than seeping between joints and saturating the base. In areas

where the walkway runs alongside a house or retaining wall, install a **4-inch perforated drainage pipe** wrapped in filter fabric along the low side, directing water to a suitable outlet. NB receives 1,100–1,200mm of annual precipitation plus significant spring snowmelt — any walkway that traps water beneath it will heave.

Geotextile fabric between the native soil and the gravel base is essential in Fredericton's clay-heavy river valley soils and recommended everywhere in NB. Without it, fine clay particles migrate upward into the gravel base over time, clogging drainage channels and creating the water-retaining conditions that cause frost heave. The fabric costs only $0.50–1.00 per square foot and can extend your walkway's lifespan by years.

Edge restraints prevent lateral movement that accelerates heaving damage. Use heavy-duty polyethylene or aluminum edge restraints spiked into the compacted base with 10-inch galvanized spikes. Without proper edging, NB's freeze-thaw cycles will gradually push pavers outward from the edges, opening joints and allowing water infiltration that worsens heaving.

Polymeric sand in the joints is a must for NB walkways. It binds pavers together, preventing individual units from lifting independently during freeze-thaw cycles. It also blocks water from seeping between joints into the base layer. Apply polymeric sand on a dry day when temperatures are above 0C and no rain is forecast for 24 hours.

Even with perfect installation, minor settling may occur after the first NB winter. Budget for a **spring tune-up** — lifting any shifted pavers, re-levelling the bedding sand, and re-applying polymeric sand. This 1–2 hour maintenance task in April prevents small issues from becoming costly repairs. Professional walkway installation in NB costs **$20 to $35 per square foot**, and the investment in a proper base saves thousands in future repairs.

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Q7

Should I choose natural stone or interlocking pavers for a NB patio?

Both natural stone and interlocking pavers can perform well in New Brunswick's climate, but interlocking concrete pavers offer better freeze-thaw durability and lower cost, while natural stone provides a premium aesthetic and potentially longer lifespan — your choice depends on budget, style preference, and maintenance tolerance.

Interlocking concrete pavers are the more popular choice in NB for good reason. They're manufactured to meet CSA freeze-thaw standards (8,000+ PSI compressive strength, less than 5% water absorption), come in consistent thicknesses for easy installation, and interlock to resist shifting during frost heave cycles. The colour and pattern options are extensive — from natural stone look-alikes to modern geometric designs. Interlocking pavers cost **$18 to $30 per square foot installed** in New Brunswick, making a 200-square-foot patio approximately $3,600 to $6,000. They're also easier to repair — a heaved or cracked paver can be lifted and replaced individually without disturbing the surrounding surface.

Natural stone — particularly granite, quartzite, and dense bluestone — creates an undeniably beautiful patio that many homeowners prefer. Each piece is unique, the surface develops character over time, and stone generally outlasts concrete pavers by decades. However, natural stone costs **$25 to $45 per square foot installed** in NB, requires more skill to install due to irregular thicknesses, and some stone types (softer limestone, sandstone) can deteriorate in NB's harsh freeze-thaw environment. If choosing natural stone, stick to **dense, low-porosity varieties** — granite is the safest choice for NB's climate.

Maintenance differs between the two options. Interlocking pavers with polymeric sand joints require occasional re-sanding (every 3–5 years in NB's climate) and may need individual paver relevelling after particularly harsh winters. Natural stone patios may need more frequent joint maintenance — stone irregular shapes make polymeric sand application trickier — and uneven surfaces can collect water that freezes and causes further shifting. Both types benefit from annual sealing in NB to resist staining and moisture penetration.

The base preparation is identical for both in New Brunswick's climate. Whether you choose stone or pavers, you need 12–16 inches of compacted granular base, proper drainage slope, geotextile fabric on clay soils, and edge restraints. Don't let a contractor convince you that stone's heavier weight means you can skimp on base depth — NB's frost doesn't care how heavy the surface material is.

For most New Brunswick homeowners, **interlocking pavers offer the best balance of performance, aesthetics, and value.** They handle freeze-thaw reliably, come with manufacturer warranties (typically 25 years for lifetime), and can be installed faster, which reduces labour costs. Reserve natural stone for higher-budget projects where the premium look justifies the extra cost, and always use a stone type proven in Maritime climates.

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Q8

How do I build a retaining wall that handles New Brunswick's frost depth?

A retaining wall in New Brunswick must have its footing below the frost line — 1.2 to 1.5 metres deep — to prevent the entire structure from heaving and failing. This is the single most critical requirement for NB retaining walls, and it's where many DIY projects and even some contractor installations fail. A retaining wall that doesn't account for NB's frost depth will crack, lean, or collapse within a few winters.

For walls under 2 feet tall, a gravity wall system using interlocking concrete blocks (like Allan Block or Redi-Rock) can be built on a compacted gravel base without a poured concrete footing. Excavate a trench 6 inches below grade, lay 6 inches of compacted granular base, and bury the first course of blocks completely below grade level. The buried course provides stability, and the gravel base allows water drainage that minimizes frost heave. This approach works well for small garden terracing in NB.

For walls 2 to 4 feet tall, you need a more engineered approach. The base trench should extend 12–18 inches below grade with 10–12 inches of compacted gravel. Use a **geogrid reinforcement system** — layers of grid fabric that extend back into the soil behind the wall, anchoring it against the lateral pressure of frozen, expanding soil. In NB's climate, geogrid is essential at every 2 courses of block rather than the standard every 3 courses recommended in milder climates. The backfill behind the wall must be **free-draining gravel, not native soil** — NB's clay-heavy soils trap water that freezes, expands, and pushes the wall forward.

For walls over 4 feet tall, New Brunswick building codes typically require engineered design. This means a licensed engineer designs the wall with a poured concrete footing that extends below the frost line (1.2–1.5m), reinforced with rebar, and sized according to the specific soil conditions and wall height. The engineering cost

($500–$2,000) is a small fraction of the total project and protects an investment of **$35 to $65 per square foot of wall face**.

Drainage behind the wall is non-negotiable in NB. Install a 4-inch perforated drainage pipe at the base of the wall wrapped in filter fabric, surrounded by clear gravel. This pipe must daylight to a suitable outlet — not just dead-end behind the wall. The backfill zone (12–24 inches behind the wall face) should be clear 3/4-inch gravel, not soil, to prevent hydrostatic pressure buildup during spring thaw when snowmelt and rainfall saturate the ground simultaneously.

Build retaining walls in New Brunswick during **late spring through early fall** when the ground is workable. Never pour concrete footings when temperatures are below 5C or when frost is expected within 48 hours.

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Q9

What are the best materials for outdoor steps in New Brunswick's climate?

The best materials for outdoor steps in New Brunswick are natural granite, precast concrete step units, and interlocking concrete pavers — all of which handle the province's extreme freeze-thaw cycles, heavy snowfall, and ice salt exposure while providing safe, slip-resistant surfaces through winter. Material choice affects both longevity and safety in NB's demanding climate.

Precast concrete step units are the most common choice in New Brunswick for good reason. These solid, reinforced concrete blocks are manufactured to withstand Canadian freeze-thaw cycles and come in standard tread depths (12–14 inches) and riser heights (6–8 inches) that meet building code requirements. They're quick to install on a compacted gravel base, resist chipping from snow shovels and ice scrapers, and typically last 30+ years. A single precast step unit costs **$80 to $200** depending on width, and professional installation of a 3–4 step entry runs

approximately $1,500 to $3,000 in New Brunswick.

Natural granite is the premium choice for NB outdoor steps. Granite is extremely dense with virtually zero water absorption, making it impervious to freeze-thaw damage. It handles road salt without deterioration and provides a naturally textured surface that offers good traction in wet and icy conditions — though a thermal or bush-hammered finish is far safer than a polished surface. Granite steps cost more — **$300 to $600 per step installed** — but they'll outlast the house. Maritime NB has several local granite suppliers, which helps manage cost compared to imported stone.

Interlocking concrete pavers built into step structures offer design flexibility. Pavers can be laid over a concrete or compacted gravel riser structure to create steps that match an adjacent patio. The key is using pavers rated for NB freeze-thaw conditions (CSA A231.2 standard, 60mm minimum thickness) and ensuring the underlying structure is properly engineered with footings below the frost line on any step structure over 2 feet in total height.

Materials to avoid in NB include smooth concrete, soft limestone, clay brick, and untreated wood. Smooth-finished concrete becomes dangerously slippery when wet or icy. Soft limestone and some sandstones absorb water and spall after repeated freezing. Standard clay bricks chip and flake within a few NB winters. Pressure-treated wood steps, while common, become slippery with ice and algae, require regular maintenance, and typically need replacement every 10–15 years — a poor long-term investment.

Safety features are critical for NB steps. Ensure all treads have a slip-resistant surface texture. Install step lighting for dark Maritime winter evenings when sunrise is after 8 AM and sunset before 5 PM. Consider adding a railing — NB building code requires railings for steps with more than 3 risers or a total rise exceeding 600mm. A heated step mat or integrated heating cable system ($200–$500) can prevent ice buildup on critical entry steps through NB's long winter.

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Q10

How do I plan a backyard fire pit area in New Brunswick?

Planning a backyard fire pit area in New Brunswick involves choosing the right location, building a proper base that handles freeze-thaw cycles, and complying with local burn regulations that vary by municipality across the province. A well-designed fire pit extends the usable outdoor season in NB from May through October — and even into the early winter months for hardy Maritime residents.

Location requirements come first. New Brunswick municipalities generally require fire pits to be a minimum of **10 to 15 feet from any structure, fence, overhang, or property line** — check your specific municipal bylaws in Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, or your local area, as distances vary. Position the fire pit away from overhanging trees (especially NB's plentiful spruce and fir, which are highly flammable), and consider prevailing wind direction — smoke blowing toward your house or your neighbour's defeats the purpose. A spot with a natural windbreak from NB's Maritime breezes, like a garden wall or dense hedge, makes the area more comfortable.

The base construction must account for NB's climate. Excavate the fire pit area to a depth of **8 to 10 inches** and fill with compacted granular base material, similar to patio construction. While the fire pit itself doesn't need to extend below the frost line (it's not a structural wall), the surrounding patio or seating area does need a proper base to prevent heaving. For the fire pit ring, use **fire-rated concrete blocks or natural stone** — standard retaining wall blocks can crack from heat. A simple 36-to-42-inch diameter fire pit requires approximately 30–40 fire-rated blocks and costs **$300 to $800 for materials alone**.

Surrounding the fire pit with a paver patio creates a functional gathering space. Plan for a minimum of **6 to 8 feet of clearance** from the fire pit edge to any seating — this keeps chairs back from intense heat while still feeling the warmth. A 200-square-foot paver patio surrounding a fire pit costs approximately **$3,600 to $6,000 installed** in New Brunswick. Integrate built-in seating walls (retaining wall blocks at sitting height, approximately 18 inches) to create permanent seating that doesn't blow away in NB's coastal winds.

Drainage matters around NB fire pits. Slope the surrounding patio away from the fire pit at 1/8 inch per foot so rainfall and snowmelt don't pool in the fire bowl. Consider installing a simple drain grate in the fire pit floor connected to a short gravel dry well beneath — this prevents the pit from becoming a pond during NB's spring thaw and heavy rains.

Complete fire pit installations in New Brunswick, including the pit, surrounding patio, and basic seating area, typically range from **$1,500 to $5,000** for DIY to **$5,000 to $15,000** professionally installed. Natural gas or propane fire pits are an alternative that avoids burn regulations entirely — they require a gas line installation ($500–$1,500) but offer instant on/off convenience and no smoke.

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Q11

When is the best time of year to install a patio in New Brunswick?

The best time to install a patio in New Brunswick is from mid-May through September, with June and September being the ideal months. This window provides workable ground conditions, comfortable working temperatures, and enough time for the base to settle before NB's first hard frost, which typically arrives between late September and mid-October depending on your location.

June is considered the optimal month for several reasons. The ground has fully thawed and dried out from spring snowmelt — a critical factor since excavating and compacting wet soil creates a poor base that will heave. Temperatures are warm enough for polymeric sand to cure properly (it needs sustained temperatures above 0C for 24 hours after application). And June gives the completed patio an entire summer of warm weather to settle and compact before winter stress tests the installation. Starting in June also means the project is complete before NB's busy July–August period when many contractors are fully booked.

September offers a second excellent window. The summer heat has passed, making heavy physical work more comfortable. Rainfall is typically lower than spring, and the ground is dry and stable. Many NB hardscape contractors offer **end-of-season pricing in September** — discounts of 10–15% are not uncommon as they try to fill their schedules before winter shutdown. The risk with September is running out of warm weather — if the project is delayed, you may be racing against frost to get polymeric sand applied before temperatures drop.

Avoid installing patios from November through April in New Brunswick. Frozen ground cannot be properly excavated or compacted, and the base materials won't achieve the density needed to resist frost heave. Concrete elements (like step units or wall caps) should not be installed when temperatures may drop below 0C within 48

hours. Even a project started in October risks complications if an early frost hits before the polymeric sand cures.

Spring installation (April–May) has caveats. While tempting to get an early start, NB's spring presents challenges. Frost may still be in the ground in April — particularly in northern NB and shaded areas. Spring rains and snowmelt saturate soil, making excavation messy and compaction unreliable. If you must start in spring, wait until the ground has fully thawed and surface water has drained — typically mid-to-late May in the Saint John and Moncton areas, and early June near Fredericton and points north.

Book your contractor early. NB's short construction season means experienced hardscape installers fill their summer schedules by March or April. If you want a June installation, start getting quotes in February and book by April. A typical patio project takes 3–7 days to install depending on size and complexity, with costs running **$18 to $30 per square foot** for interlocking pavers.

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Q12

Can I install patio pavers myself or should I hire a pro in NB?

You can install patio pavers yourself in New Brunswick if you're physically fit, have basic construction skills, and are willing to invest in proper base preparation — but NB's extreme freeze-thaw climate makes the base work significantly more critical and demanding than in milder regions. A poorly prepared DIY base will fail within 1–2 NB winters, making the entire project a costly mistake.

What DIY saves you — and what it costs. Professional patio installation in NB runs **$18 to $30 per square foot**, with labour accounting for roughly 50–60% of that total. A 200-square-foot patio installed professionally costs $3,600 to $6,000. Doing it yourself, materials alone run approximately $8 to $15 per square foot — so you'd spend $1,600 to $3,000 and save $2,000 to $3,000. However, you'll need to rent a plate compactor ($75–100/day),

potentially a small excavator for larger patios ($250–400/day), and invest 2–4 full weekends of hard physical labour.

The base is where DIY projects succeed or fail in NB. New Brunswick's frost depth of 1.2–1.5 metres and 100+ annual freeze-thaw cycles demand a 12–16 inch compacted granular base — no shortcuts. This means excavating several cubic yards of soil (by hand for a small patio or with rented equipment for larger ones), hauling in and spreading gravel in 2-inch lifts, and compacting each lift systematically. Skipping lifts, under-compacting, or using the wrong base material are the most common DIY mistakes, and NB's climate punishes them ruthlessly. If you aren't confident in base preparation, consider hiring a pro for the base and excavation only, then laying the pavers yourself.

Situations where hiring a professional is strongly recommended. If your property has clay soil (common in the Fredericton area and Saint John River valley), drainage challenges, or significant grade changes, professional expertise is worth the cost. Patios adjacent to house foundations need careful drainage planning to prevent water infiltration. Any patio incorporating steps, retaining walls, or complex patterns benefits from professional precision. Accessible patios larger than 200 square feet become logistically challenging for DIY in terms of material delivery, equipment, and physical stamina.

Situations where DIY makes sense. A small to medium patio (100–200 square feet) on relatively flat ground with sandy or well-drained soil — like many properties in the Moncton, Shediac, and Miramichi areas — is a manageable DIY project. Simple rectangular layouts with running bond or herringbone patterns are easier than curves or complex designs. If you choose DIY, invest time in learning proper technique: watch professional installation videos, read manufacturer specifications, and don't rush the base preparation.

A middle-ground approach that many NB homeowners take is hiring a contractor for excavation and base preparation (the critical part), then laying pavers themselves. This typically costs **$8 to $12 per square foot** for the base work alone and gives you professional-quality frost protection with DIY savings on the visible paver installation.

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Q13

How do I prevent weeds from growing between patio pavers in NB?

The most effective way to prevent weeds between patio pavers in New Brunswick is using polymeric sand in all joints, which hardens when activated with water and creates a solid barrier that blocks weed germination, resists ant tunnelling, and withstands NB's heavy rainfall and freeze-thaw cycles. Standard joint sand is simply not adequate for Maritime conditions — it washes out, settles, and creates the perfect germination bed for weeds.

Polymeric sand is your primary defence. This specially engineered sand contains polymer binders that activate when wetted, forming a firm but slightly flexible joint fill. It locks pavers together while blocking seeds from reaching soil below. Apply on a completely dry surface when air temperatures are above 10C with no rain forecast for 24 hours. In NB's Maritime climate, timing the application for a clear, warm day is sometimes the biggest challenge — check extended forecasts carefully. Quality polymeric sand costs **$25 to $30 per bag** and covers approximately 30–40 square feet depending on joint width.

Proper installation technique matters. Sweep the polymeric sand into all joints, then use a leaf blower to remove every particle from paver surfaces before wetting — any sand left on the surface will haze and stain. Activate with a gentle mist, not a hard spray, applying water in 3–4 cycles with 5-minute intervals between each. The sand should darken and begin to firm up. After 24 hours, the joints should be solid enough to resist a fingernail press. In NB's climate, expect to reapply polymeric sand every **3 to 5 years** as freeze-thaw cycles and heavy rainfall gradually erode the joint fill.

A proper base prevents weeds from below. If your patio was built with the correct 12–16 inch granular base for NB's climate, there's very little organic material beneath the pavers for weeds to root in. Geotextile fabric between the native soil and gravel base provides an additional weed barrier from below. Most weed problems in NB paver patios actually start from above — seeds blown or dropped onto the surface germinate in accumulated dirt and organic debris in joints, not from roots pushing up through the base.

Regular maintenance prevents weed establishment. Sweep your patio thoroughly every 2–3 weeks during the growing season (June through September in NB) to remove organic debris, leaf litter, and soil deposits that accumulate in joints and provide germination medium. An annual power wash in May — after NB's spring thaw and before the growing season — removes winter grime and any early weed sprouts before they establish.

For existing weed problems, pull weeds by hand or use a paver joint scraper tool before they seed. Avoid chemical herbicides like glyphosate on paver joints — they can stain certain paver types and damage polymeric sand. Boiling water poured directly on weeds is an effective organic alternative. White vinegar (horticultural strength, 20%) also kills existing weeds without harming the paver or joint material. After removing weeds, top up joints with fresh polymeric sand to prevent recolonization.

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Q14

How do I choose between concrete and natural stone for NB walkways?

Concrete pavers offer better value and freeze-thaw reliability for most New Brunswick walkways, while natural stone provides a premium look that justifies its higher cost in high-visibility areas like front entrances and garden paths. Both materials can perform well in NB's climate when properly installed, but they differ significantly in cost, maintenance, and long-term durability.

Concrete interlocking pavers are manufactured to meet CSA A231.2 freeze-thaw standards, with compressive strengths of 8,000+ PSI and water absorption rates below 5%. This consistency means every paver in your walkway has the same proven resistance to NB's 100+ annual freeze-thaw cycles. They come in uniform thickness (60mm standard for walkways), making installation faster and more predictable. Concrete pavers cost **$18 to $30 per square foot installed** in New Brunswick, and if one cracks or heaves, it can be individually replaced without disturbing the rest of the walkway.

Natural stone walkways use flagstone, granite, or quartzite set either on a granular base with sand joints or mortared onto a concrete slab. The look is undeniably beautiful — each stone is unique, and natural stone develops a weathered patina that many homeowners prefer. However, not all stone types handle NB's climate equally. **Granite** is the safest choice — it's dense, low-porosity, and essentially impervious to freeze-thaw damage. **Slate** performs reasonably well but can delaminate over time in severe climates. **Limestone and sandstone** are riskier — softer varieties absorb moisture and spall after repeated freezing. Natural stone walkways cost **$25 to $45 per square foot installed** in NB.

Installation considerations in NB's climate. Both materials require the same 12–14 inch compacted granular base to resist frost heave. Natural stone's irregular thickness (often varying 1/2 to 1 inch between pieces) requires more bedding sand adjustment during installation, increasing labour time and cost. Concrete pavers' uniform dimensions allow for tighter joints filled with polymeric sand — natural stone's wider, irregular joints are harder to seal effectively and may need more frequent maintenance.

Winter safety differs between materials. Concrete pavers generally offer better traction due to their manufactured texture, though both materials can be slippery when icy. Natural stone walkways with wider joints can collect ice and create uneven surfaces as individual stones shift during freeze-thaw cycles. Concrete pavers' interlocking design resists this lateral movement better.

Maintenance over time in NB. Concrete pavers may need polymeric sand refreshed every 3–5 years and occasional relevelling after harsh winters. Natural stone may require resetting shifted stones and repointing joints more frequently. Both benefit from annual sealing to resist staining and moisture penetration. For most NB homeowners, concrete pavers offer the best combination of durability, cost, and safety — reserve natural stone for focal areas where the aesthetic premium is most appreciated.

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Q15

What are the best edging options for garden beds in New Brunswick?

The best garden bed edging options for New Brunswick include aluminum or steel landscape edging, natural stone, and concrete curbing — materials that withstand the province's freeze-thaw cycles, heavy snow loads, and wet Maritime conditions without shifting, rotting, or crumbling. Cheap plastic edging sold at garden centres is the most common choice and the most common failure in NB's climate.

Aluminum landscape edging (brands like Sure-Loc or Permaloc) is the professional's choice for NB garden beds. It's thin (1/8 inch), virtually invisible once mulch is applied, and stays rigid through freeze-thaw cycles that warp and pop plastic edging out of the ground. Aluminum won't rot, rust, or degrade from moisture exposure — critical in NB's 1,100–1,200mm annual rainfall climate. It installs with stakes driven into compacted soil every 3–4 feet and bends smoothly around curves. Professional-grade aluminum edging costs **$3 to $6 per linear foot installed** and lasts essentially forever.

Steel landscape edging is similar to aluminum but heavier-gauge and even more rigid. It's ideal for straight lines and sharp geometric bed edges. Cor-ten steel (weathering steel) develops an attractive rust patina that complements natural NB landscapes. Standard steel will rust through eventually, but quality landscape-grade steel edging lasts 15–20 years in NB conditions. Steel edging costs **$4 to $8 per linear foot installed**.

Natural stone edging creates a substantial, visible border that doubles as a design element. Flat fieldstone set vertically or slightly angled creates a rustic NB aesthetic. Granite cobblestones (4x4 or 6x6 inch cubes) set in a concrete footing create a formal, permanent edge. The key in NB is setting stone edging on a **4-inch compacted gravel base** so frost heave shifts the entire edge uniformly rather than popping individual stones. Natural stone edging costs **$8 to $15 per linear foot installed** depending on the stone type and setting method.

Concrete curbing (continuous poured-in-place edging) creates a clean, permanent border. A machine extrudes the concrete into a consistent profile along your bed edge. It's popular in NB for its clean look and permanence, though it can crack if the base isn't properly prepared for freeze-thaw movement. Concrete curbing costs **$5 to $10 per linear foot** and typically lasts 10–20 years in NB before cracks develop.

Avoid these materials in NB. Thin plastic roll edging warps and pops out of frozen ground every winter — you'll reinstall it every spring. Untreated wood edging rots within 2–3 years in NB's wet climate. Rubber edging degrades from UV exposure and becomes brittle in cold temperatures. Even pressure-treated wood timbers, while lasting longer (8–12 years), eventually rot and shift with frost heave.

For a typical NB home with 100–200 linear feet of garden bed edging, budget **$300 to $1,200** for quality aluminum or steel edging installed, or **$800 to $3,000** for natural stone. The investment pays for itself by eliminating the annual grass-creeping and edge-repair cycle that cheap edging creates.

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Q16

How do I design an outdoor living space for NB's short summer season?

Designing an outdoor living space for New Brunswick's short summer season means maximizing usability from May through October by incorporating weather protection, warmth elements, and multi-functional zones that extend comfortable outdoor time beyond the traditional July–August peak. With smart design, NB homeowners can enjoy their outdoor spaces for 5–6 months rather than just 8–10 weeks.

Start with a sheltered structure. A pergola with a retractable canopy or a covered pavilion provides shade during summer heat and protection from Maritime rain showers that can roll in quickly. NB receives 1,100–1,200mm of rainfall annually, and a covered area means you don't retreat indoors at the first drop. Orient the open sides away from prevailing winds (typically northwest in NB) and toward afternoon sun. A substantial pergola costs **$3,000 to $8,000** in New Brunswick, while a fully roofed pavilion runs $8,000 to $20,000.

Incorporate heat elements to extend the season into cool spring and fall evenings. A built-in fire pit or outdoor fireplace serves as both a heating source and a gathering focal point. NB evenings drop below 10C by early September, and a fire feature makes October outdoor evenings comfortable. For more consistent heat, outdoor-rated infrared heaters mounted under a pergola ($300–$600 each) provide targeted warmth without wind interference. A natural gas fire pit connected to your home's gas line ($2,000–$5,000 installed) offers instant heat without firewood management.

Zone the space for multiple functions. Create distinct areas for dining, lounging, and cooking that flow naturally. An outdoor kitchen with a built-in grill, counter space, and a small refrigerator transforms your patio into a true living space — NB homeowners who cook outdoors spend significantly more time outside. Even a simple grill station with a 4-foot stone counter ($1,500–$3,000) elevates the experience. Position the dining area closest to the house for easy access, with the lounge and fire pit further into the yard.

The patio base must handle NB's climate. Size the patio to accommodate your planned zones — a typical multi-function outdoor living space needs **300 to 500 square feet** of paved area. At $18 to $30 per square foot for interlocking pavers, this runs $5,400 to $15,000 for the patio surface alone. Build the standard 12–16 inch compacted gravel base required for NB's frost depth. Consider incorporating a step-down or level change between zones for visual interest and to work with natural grade changes.

Lighting extends evening use dramatically. NB's summer days are long (sunrise before 6 AM, sunset after 9 PM in late June), but by September, you're losing light by 7:30 PM. Low-voltage LED landscape lighting along walkways, string lights over the dining area, and uplighting on key plantings create ambiance and safety. A complete lighting package costs **$1,000 to $3,000 installed**. With these elements combined, your NB outdoor living space becomes functional from May's first warm evenings through October's crisp fall nights.

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Q17

How thick should patio pavers be for New Brunswick freeze-thaw cycles?

Patio pavers in New Brunswick should be a minimum of 60mm (approximately 2.4 inches) thick for walkways and patios, and 80mm (3.15 inches) for driveways and areas subject to vehicle traffic or heavy snow removal equipment. This minimum thickness ensures pavers can withstand the province's 100+ annual freeze-thaw cycles, the weight of 250–300cm of annual snowfall, and the mechanical stress of winter maintenance without cracking or breaking.

The 60mm standard is the baseline for NB conditions. Pavers at this thickness provide adequate structural integrity for pedestrian traffic and resist the upward force of frost heave when supported by a properly compacted 12–16 inch granular base. Most major paver manufacturers (Techo-Bloc, Permacon, Belgard) produce their standard residential patio pavers at 60mm, and these products are tested to CSA A231.2 Canadian freeze-thaw standards. Going below 60mm — sometimes sold as "economy" pavers at 50mm — saves a few dollars per square foot but dramatically increases the risk of cracking in NB's first serious winter.

The 80mm thickness is recommended for several NB-specific scenarios. If a snowblower or small tractor will be used on the patio surface, 60mm pavers can crack under the equipment weight and vibration — 80mm handles this stress. If the patio doubles as an occasional parking area or will support heavy furniture and planters, the extra thickness provides a margin of safety. Driveways absolutely require 80mm minimum in NB — vehicle weight combined with freeze-thaw stress will break thinner pavers within a few years. The cost difference between 60mm and 80mm pavers is typically **$2 to $4 per square foot** — a modest premium for significantly improved durability.

Paver material affects the practical thickness requirement. Concrete interlocking pavers at 60mm are engineered to handle NB conditions because they're manufactured with high-strength concrete (8,000+ PSI) and consistent density. Natural stone pavers vary widely — dense granite can perform at 50mm where softer sandstone might need 75mm or more. If using natural stone for a NB patio, ask your supplier for the specific compressive strength and freeze-thaw test results for the stone type you're considering.

Thickness alone doesn't guarantee performance in NB. A 60mm paver on an inadequate base will heave and crack just as readily as a 40mm paver. The base depth (12–16 inches of compacted gravel), proper drainage, and polymeric sand joints work together with paver thickness to create a system that resists NB's climate. Think of it as a chain — every link must be strong.

When shopping for pavers in New Brunswick, verify the thickness measurement carefully. Some manufacturers list **nominal thickness** (which includes tolerance variations) while others list **actual thickness**. Ask for the actual minimum thickness and confirm it meets the 60mm standard. Budget **$18 to $30 per square foot installed** for quality 60mm pavers on a proper NB base, or $22 to $35 for 80mm pavers. The investment in proper thickness prevents the far more expensive cost of ripping out and replacing failed thin pavers after a couple of Maritime winters.

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Q18

Do I need drainage installed under my patio in New Brunswick?

In most cases, yes — New Brunswick patios benefit significantly from dedicated drainage, especially if the patio is adjacent to a house foundation, sits on clay-heavy soil, or is in a low-lying area. NB receives 1,100–1,200mm of annual precipitation plus substantial spring snowmelt, and all that water needs somewhere to

go. A patio without drainage can trap water beneath it, leading to frost heave, foundation damage, and premature failure.

The patio surface itself provides primary drainage through its slope and permeable joints. Every NB patio should slope at a minimum of 1/8 inch per foot (1% grade) away from any structures. This directs surface water off the patio rather than letting it pool. Polymeric sand in paver joints allows some water to percolate through slowly, and the 12–16 inch granular base beneath the pavers acts as a drainage reservoir that disperses water into the surrounding soil.

Foundation-adjacent patios need active drainage. When a patio meets a house foundation wall, water running off the patio surface can pool against the foundation and seep into the basement — a common and expensive problem in NB homes. Install a **4-inch perforated drainage pipe** in a gravel-filled trench along the foundation side of the patio, wrapped in filter fabric to prevent clogging. This pipe should slope at minimum 1% grade toward a suitable outlet — either a dry well, a rain garden, or daylight at a lower point in the yard. The cost for this foundation drainage is approximately **$10 to $20 per linear foot** and prevents thousands of dollars in potential water damage.

Clay soil areas require enhanced drainage. If your property has the heavy clay soil common around Fredericton, the Saint John River valley, and many inland NB locations, water does not percolate through native soil efficiently. The granular base under your patio will fill with water during heavy rain or spring thaw and have nowhere to drain. In clay soil situations, install perforated drainage pipe along the lowest edge of the patio base, running to a daylight outlet or dry well. Some contractors in NB install a full drainage grid beneath the patio base for severe clay conditions.

Sandy coastal soils may not need additional drainage. Properties near Moncton, Shediac, Miramichi, and along the coast often have sandy, well-draining soil that naturally wicks water away from the patio base. If you can dig a hole, fill it with water, and it drains within 30 minutes, your soil likely provides adequate natural drainage. In these situations, the standard granular base and proper surface slope may be sufficient without dedicated drainage pipe.

Spring snowmelt is NB's biggest drainage challenge. When 250–300cm of accumulated snow melts over 2–4 weeks in March and April — often while the ground is still partially frozen — massive volumes of water need to move away from your patio and foundation. A drainage system sized for summer rain may be overwhelmed by spring thaw conditions. Ensure your drainage outlet doesn't terminate in an area that will be frozen or snow-covered during the critical March–April thaw period. Professional patio drainage design and installation in NB adds **$500 to $2,000** to the overall patio project cost — a worthwhile investment given the province's challenging water management conditions.

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Q19

How do I repair a heaved paver walkway after a New Brunswick winter?

Repairing a heaved paver walkway after a New Brunswick winter involves lifting the affected pavers, relevelling the bedding sand, recompacting the base if necessary, and resetting the pavers with fresh polymeric sand — a process that most homeowners can handle for minor heaving, though extensive damage may indicate a base failure that requires professional intervention.

Wait until spring thaw is complete before repairing. In most of NB, this means late April to mid-May — the ground needs to be fully thawed and surface water from snowmelt needs to have drained away. Repairing while frost is still in the ground is pointless because the remaining frost will continue pushing pavers as it melts. You want stable, dry conditions before starting.

For minor heaving (pavers raised less than 1/2 inch), the repair is straightforward. Remove the affected pavers using two flat pry bars or a paver extractor tool — slide them under opposite edges and lift evenly. Scrape away the old bedding sand beneath the heaved area. Check the gravel base below — if it's still firm and level, simply add fresh bedding sand (concrete sand or stone dust), screed it level using a straight board, and reset the pavers. Tap them into place with a rubber mallet, confirm they're level with surrounding pavers using a straightedge, and fill joints with fresh polymeric sand.

For moderate heaving (pavers raised 1/2 to 1 inch), the bedding sand and possibly the upper layer of gravel base have likely been disturbed. Remove pavers from the entire affected area plus 6–12 inches beyond the visible damage. Scrape out all bedding sand. If the gravel base has soft spots or voids, add fresh granular A material and compact it with a hand tamper or small plate compactor. Re-screed 1 inch of bedding sand, reset pavers, and apply polymeric sand. This level of repair costs **$5 to $10 per square foot** if hiring a professional in NB.

For severe heaving (pavers raised over 1 inch, multiple areas affected), the base itself has likely failed — usually because the original base was too shallow for NB's frost depth, poor drainage is allowing water to saturate the base, or clay soil is migrating into the gravel. This requires a more extensive repair: remove all pavers from the affected section, excavate and rebuild the base to proper NB depth (12–16 inches), install geotextile fabric if missing, ensure drainage is adequate, and reinstall the pavers. This is typically a job for a professional, costing **$15 to $25 per square foot** — approaching the cost of new installation.

Prevent future heaving by addressing root causes. Ensure the walkway has adequate surface drainage slope (1/8 inch per foot minimum). Check that downspouts and runoff sources aren't directing water under the walkway. Confirm that polymeric sand is intact in all joints — missing joint fill allows water to saturate the base directly. An annual spring inspection and touch-up after NB's winter — typically a 1–2 hour maintenance task — keeps minor

issues from becoming major repairs.

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