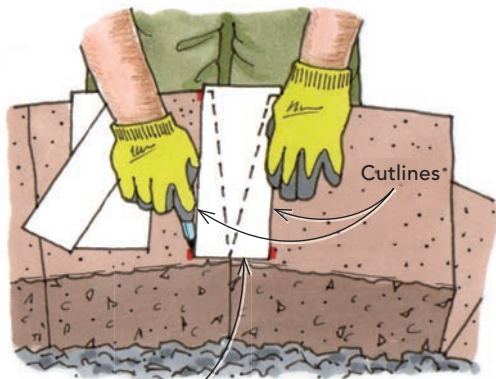


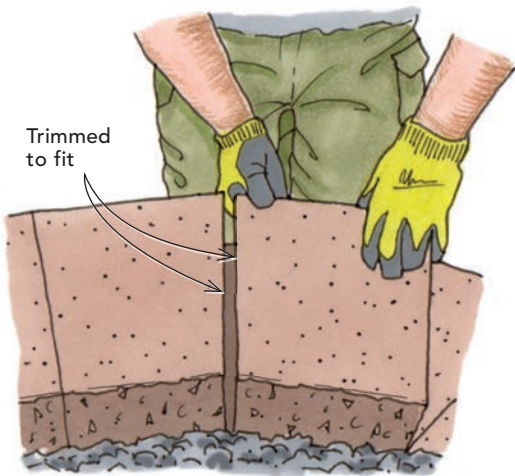
Tips & Techniques

HANDS-ON ADVICE FROM READERS IN THE FIELD

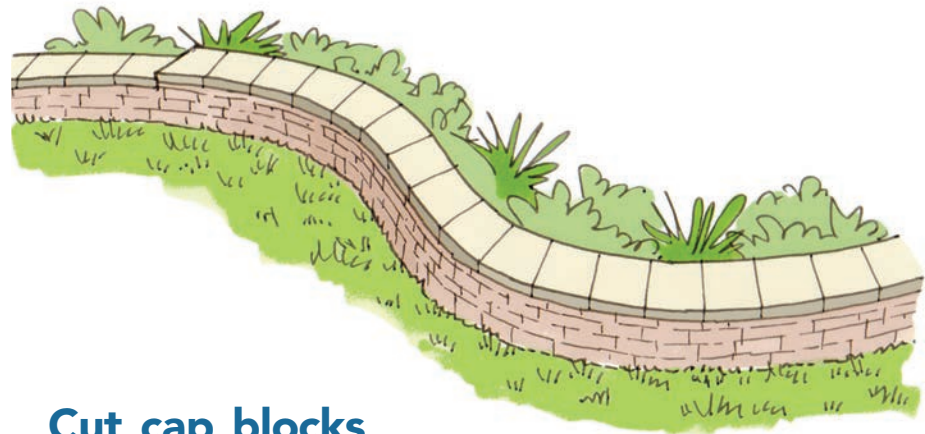
EDITED BY MARK PETERSEN



Scrap-board template



Trimmed to fit



Cut cap blocks

In order to have a gap-free row of cap blocks on a curved retaining wall (which most are), the cap blocks will have to be trimmed to fit. Here's how I plan these cuts: If the curve of the wall varies, the gaps between the cap blocks will as well, so I cut some scraps of wood to the length of the block and varying in width. Scraps that are 3 in., 4 in., and 5 in. wide will usually suffice. First, I set the blocks temporarily in place along the shape of the curve. Then I choose the scrap that most closely matches the size of the gap, center the scrap on both the front and back of the gap, and mark a cutline on each block using the sides of the scrap as a template. Once I trim the blocks down with a masonry saw, I set them in place and move on to the next. This process produces a cap row with smooth curves that match the course of regular blocks below it.

—MATT
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■ Got a tip?

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Better coping with a jigsaw

You can achieve fast and accurate results coping trim with a jigsaw. It's especially handy when working with thick stock. Here are a few tips that will help you achieve better results. For starters, always cut with a sharp blade. I use Bosch T244D blades, the same ones recommended by Collins Tool Co., the maker of the coping foot I use. When you're ready to make the cut, make sure your trim is held firmly in place. Holding the saw upside down will give you a clear view of exactly what the blade is doing. I like to have the body of the saw ride along on one finger from my free hand. I find this adds stability and gives me a better feel for what the blade is doing. And it's always a good idea to practice on a few scrap pieces first.

—MARLON RODRIGUEZ
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