

Smart home improvement starts here.

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## RETAINING KNOWLEDGE

Sloped landscapes are often in need of a retaining wall to avoid erosion and drainage problems and provide support for near-vertical grade changes.

“Retaining walls must be engineered if you have compaction, erosion, drainage or structural issues to deal with,” says Eric Stromer, host of HGTV’s *Over Your Head* and AOL’s *DIY with Eric Stromer*. “Make sure you have a qualified general contractor on board when getting involved with retaining walls.”

According to Travis G. Brooks, member of the ASLA and owner of Brooks Landscaping Architecture, sometimes a retaining wall is not necessary. “Many short walls are installed when some gentle grading could have been used and great savings could have been made to the project cost,” Brooks says.

Aside from the functional purposes, retaining walls can be an attractive addition to your landscape. “Envision how the retaining wall can enhance your overall outdoor living area,” recommends Paul Forsberg, president of Millenia Wall Solutions in Minneapolis and inventor of retaining wall blocks that connect and lock together without mortar. ▶



“Consider elevation issues! If your steps are leading to a patio, make sure there is proper drainage to keep water from backing up and getting trapped on the patio surface.”

—Andy Freeland, owner, *Beds and Borders Landscaping Inc.*, St. Louis Park

Photo courtesy of Mom’s Landscaping & Design

**MIXING A VARIETY OF HARDSCAPES** such as stone, pavers and tile in different shapes and sizes adds visual and textural interest to your landscape.

