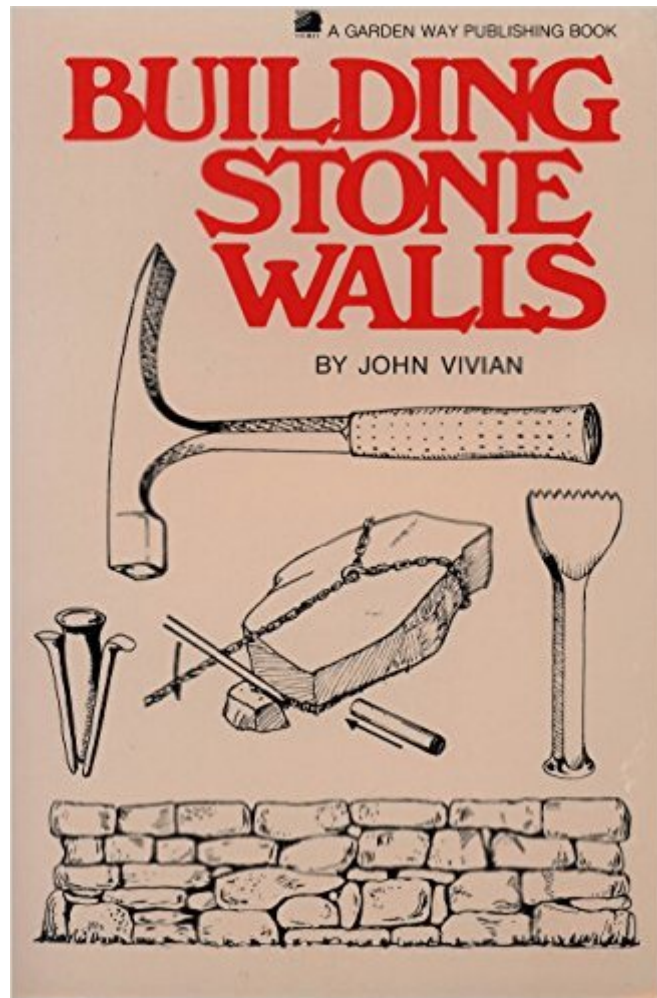


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# Building Stone Walls



## Synopsis

Rustic and charming or stately and proud, a well-built stone wall can add personality and beauty to your property. John Vivian's lively approach and step-by-step instructions encourage you to transform a pile of rocks into an enduring landscape feature with gates, retaining walls, or stiles to suit your needs. Whatever unique challenges come with your site — poor drainage, sloping ground, or low-quality rubble material — Vivian offers innovative designs and reproducible methods to help you build a beautiful, long-lasting wall.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #204,728 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > How-to & Home Improvements > Masonry #38 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > Decorating & Design > Painting & Wallpapering #103 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Outdoor & Recreational Areas

## Customer Reviews

Building Stone Walls, as a book, works very well. The writing, typography, design, and illustration all support one another like well-chosen stones, and the result is pleasing: a simple, wonderful book. Even if you have no plans to build a stone wall, the book is worth reading because you can't help but share the author's enthusiasm as he describes the permanence of stone walls, talks about different kinds of stone, discusses tools and techniques, explains footings and drainage, provides advice for working with not-so-good stone, and shares myriad other pearls of wisdom. And, if you are planning on building a stone wall, or just have a fondness for stone, then by all means add this book to your library.

Compact and concise, John Vivian's "Building Stone Walls" is a book that you can take with you

while collecting (or buying) stone for your project, preparing the location, and building your wall. It offers a good overview of stacking stone, as well as a couple of less common ways of using stone (re-channeling moving water, for example). Best of all, it has some very practical, timesaving tips, particularly advice about when it is necessary to start with a trench and gravel base and when it is not. With our particular project - building a retaining wall with field stone recycled from decaying fences around our house in the Catskills - we found that Vivian's book did not include quite enough detail. He only supplies a few paragraphs on the construction of a retaining wall, though to be fair, what information he gives is practical. By itself, however, this would not have been enough to guide us through the project. For more detailed information on retaining walls, we turned to "The Granite Kiss", "Stone in the Garden" and "The Art and Craft of Stonescaping." Keep in mind, however, that the latter two books are more lavishly illustrated, a cross between a how-to book and a coffee-table book, so you probably would not take them out in the field. That said, if you have never worked with stone, and want to get an idea of what is involved in planning and preparation, finding and moving stone, and building a wall, Vivian's book is a practical and inexpensive book to buy first. Five stars for useful, concise information in a very usable format.

This delightful, practical book is worth buying just for the first page of the introduction which is as simple, wise, and true as anything I have ever read -- about walls or about life. The book contains good, solid advice about technique and safety, and provides support for the right way of thinking and planning when you are about to build something that might stand for centuries.

Charles McRaven's "Building Stone Walls" is much better. Covers all the material and techniques that Vivian's book does and more! Don't waste your time on this book. If you're looking for more detail on working with stone, McRaven's book is the one.

I am planning on building a stone wall and as I know nothing about the subject I recently purchased 4 great books. After skimming through them all this is the one I read cover to cover the first afternoon. It is full of practical advice. It was as comfortable to read and follow as talking to a wise old uncle who always seems to be able to do anything. Each of the books I bought seemed to include something the others didn't and each seemed to miss something. However this one was almost like reading a novel. I recommend it for anyone interested in the subject. And it is full of other fun tidbits. For instance I learned what a 'Gad-pry' bar was, that in the mid 70's it was fairly new and cost about \$7.00. A quick web search found them for \$23 to \$29 today. Also reading this first

seemed to make the others more 'understandable' for me.

See the photo on the cover where the stone is being moved into place with a chain? Don't expect any details about tricks like that. I skimmed through this book the other night on the couch in less than half an hour and didn't really get much out of it. I'm sure I'll go back for another pass and for a couple of topics but it's a really short book with old, low res photos. For me, tips on moving and placing heavy rock and shaping them to fit is what I was hoping for.

This is not a technical how-to manual in any regard. If a complete guide to sourcing, moving and stacking stone into a wall or foundation is what you are seeking, immediately look elsewhere. This is a 100 page article glazing the very surface of the subject. Very little technical information is included or expanded upon, not enough to make it a single reference. The type gutters are very deep, leaving a somewhat thin column of text in the center of the page, supposedly in an effort to add to the page count. If you are completely new to the subject, this book gives an excellent overview, but you cannot rely on it for the myriad aspects you will encounter while building.

This book concentrates on dry stone walls, even though the title does specifically say this. Although the book does mention mortar stone walls, minimal detail and description is provided. One could not possibly build a mortar stone wall from reading this book.

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