

Sidewalks & Driveways

Thanks to Joe DeFalco for recommending this topic about cleaning and sealing sidewalks and patios. There are many degreasing products for sale for concrete but they usually only work on garage floor stains and not that well at that. They are really a prep for painting the floor. The discoloring and stains on your sidewalks or patio can best be removed using a general purpose cleaner along with a power washer. A power washer will bring the concrete back to a new look but even that will not remove all the stains. If you have a well and have rust stains on the concrete from the iron in the water it will probably be there forever unless you catch it early. If you use a power washer the tip has to be held very close to the concrete to be effective. Use the fan tip and do a 2 foot square section at a time. If you want to seal your sidewalk after cleaning and drying there are products that penetrate the concrete and are invisible. To seal patio blocks or stones there are products that seal and leave a gloss or satin finish. They claim a 20 year life but I doubt it. It may also make the patio a little slippery so I wouldn't recommend it for the sidewalk. The garage floor is a different story, if painted with epoxy paint it can prevent the stains from your car getting into the concrete and prevents the concrete from giving up dust. It is also much easier to clean.



Rust-Oleum has water based as well as a solvent based epoxy paints that even have a choice of floor color and colored chips to sprinkle on the paint. They also have a clear two part coating. These paints hold up to hot automobile tires also. They do have a 1-Part Advanced Acrylic if a 2-part paint scares you. There are other makes available as well, do a search on the web for garage floor epoxy paints. The floor has to be clean and dry before applying. First clean with a good degreaser and something to etch the floor. Muriatic acid was the choice years ago but is too dangerous for the average homeowner to handle and the fumes are real bad. There are some pretty good citric acid cleaners out there that are safe to use. When you get ready to apply the paint I also recommend a helper to make sure you finish the job before the paint sets up in the can. This goes for any type of epoxy two part paint. Pot life can be as short as 45 minutes or as long as two hours, depending on the product, the humidity and the temperature. Have your helper cut in the edges while you follow him with the roller. If you catch up to him, paint his hand or shoe to make him go faster. Keep in mind when all done that when wet these nice shiny floors are a little slippery.

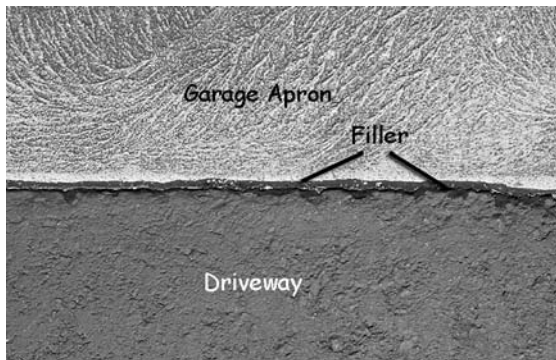
If your felt & tar board expansion joints in the sidewalk or patio are looking bad and have things like grass and moss growing out of them, there is something you can do about it to make it look much nicer. Using a linoleum knife or box cutter cut out the top three quarters of an inch of the expansion joint material, clean out the pieces and dust and fill with Quikrete gray concrete crack sealer. It does a nice job and for the three years I have had it down nothing has



grown in the joints and it stays light gray and neat looking.

Another thing to do to keep your black top driveway in good repair is to fill the gaps between it and the concrete apron of the garage floor, where it meets the sidewalk and at the curb where it meets the Belgium blocks. This will prevent most of the rain run-off from seeping in and undermining or washing

away the sand beneath and help prevent ice from forming in the winter that could cause heaving or cracking. Use a good water base crack sealer and carefully fill the crack. This material is very thin when poured out but thickens as it sets. Because it is thin it will flow into the crack and may require four or five applications. Take your time and go slowly so you don't get it all over the place. Also



make sure you don't step in it and track it into the house unless you were planning on a trip to the hospital anyway. If you have cracks in the black top itself you can do them at the same time as this is what the product was intended for.



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