

# Concrete dust can be defeated with coat of the right stain

By GARY DYMSKI  
The Washington Post

A few days after we moved into our new house, my two youngest sons took over our basement. They made it their own personal hockey arena.

By kids' standards, it was near-perfect; an 18- by 52-foot rectangular area with high concrete walls and a smooth floor. A dream come true for indoor street hockey.

It didn't take long, however, for Mom and Dad to realize a nightmare. The constant motion of shoes and sticks and plastic balls and pucks generated concrete dust (not uncommon with new concrete). It was all over. The first time the boys came up for a cold drink and were covered with dust, Mom and Dad suspended operations of AIHL (Awesome Indoor Hockey League).

This dust is disgustingly thick and covered virtually all our stored belongings (luckily much of it was still in sealed boxes). We tried everything to rid ourselves of it, including washing down the concrete walls and mopping the floors. It kept coming back. Finally, in the spring, I remembered an old patio project I had helped a friend with years before. He stained his concrete patio, and the results were excellent. That was our solution: concrete stain.

In our case, we used the concrete stain as a sealer, a way to keep the concrete dust from driving us crazy and ruining our sons' childhood.

Why not paint the concrete or even seal it? Unlike paint, which can chip, flake and peel, stain penetrates the concrete and gives nearly the same durable appearance as transparent wood stain. Paint is a film or coating that will

break down. Water and moisture that pass through the concrete invariably cause the paint to separate from the surface.

On the other hand, the stain might wear at the surface, but it won't peel. As for sealing, we wanted to brighten the basement, too. The stain solved both problems. Stain can add designer color as well as seal and even strengthen several types of concrete applications, including garage floors, stairs and walkways.

In fact, my next project will be staining some concrete scalloped landscape edging a bright white to set off some tree beds in the front of our home.

There are a couple of keys to getting a proper finish with a concrete stain. First is surface preparation. Surfaces should be free from dirt, dust and grime; some manufacturers suggest cleaning with power

sprayer and detergent. Allow to dry thoroughly.

Next, make sure you have the proper product. Translation: Check the makeup of the stain. For our basement, we used a siliconized acrylic, an interior-exterior latex product. It was great, especially that soap-and-water cleanup.

But if I were going to stain my garage floor or a high-traffic area, I would select a solvent-based stain, usually a combination of muriatic acid and metallic salts. These stains often can resist "hot-tire pickup" on garage floors (the tires won't wear off the stain).

Some stains form a chemical bond with the concrete, creating a calcium carbonate coating near the surface. Because of this chemical bond, acid-based stains are more expensive. An acrylic stain can cost about \$20 to \$30 per gallon; solvent-based stains can run

close to \$50. Some acid-based stains may even require another step or two.

The texture of the concrete surface also is important in the finished appearance of the stain. A slick, smooth surface is tougher to stain because the finer cement particles have been brought to the surface to create a seal through finish troweling. A slightly rougher surface will generally provide a richer color. There is an alternative, too. If you know you want a color on your concrete application, ask your contractor to add the stain right to the wet cement.

For more information on this application, visit the Concrete Network (www.concretenetwork.com). The Web site is an excellent source for all types of concrete solutions, including cleaning, resurfacing and waterproofing.

## Tips for staining your concrete

Here are some tips on staining concrete: Clean the concrete surface. Remove loose cement particles or any other debris from walls and floors. Oil and grease stains can be cleaned with a trisodium phosphate solution. A thick-nap roller works best. Gently put pressure on the outside edges of the roller first. This will minimize dripping from the edges. Work in a ventilated area. Use fans and open windows. New concrete should cure at least 90 days before staining. Use the proper tools. Eye goggles and latex gloves are recommended protection for acid-based stains.

# Various means of maintaining an asphalt driveway

By The Associated Press

To maintain an asphalt driveway that originally was installed with at least a four inch depth over a good sub-base, what usually is required is periodic filling of minor cracks that may develop and cosmetic sealing.

Driveways exposed to a lot of extreme weather, or those with a relatively shallow (1- to 2-inch) thickness will require more attention.

Here are specific repair techniques for common driveway problems:

### Cracks:

To repair cracks, use black-top driveway crack filler. This material comes in a cartridge and is used for cracks up to one-quarter-inch wide. Brush or vacuum loose material out of the crack, then lay in a continuous bead of filler. Allow it to set for about 10 minutes, then stroke over it with a putty knife to level and firm the bead to the crack's edges. If the crack is more than one-half-inch deep, it should first be packed with sand to within one-quarter-inch of the surface.

### Potholes:

A large pothole in the driveway can be repaired with cold-mix, an asphalt-based filler that has larger aggregate

than driveway patching compound. Typically, it comes in a 60- to 70-pound bag.

Use a cold chisel and hammer to chop out crumbling pavement until the pothole is rimmed with a clean, firm edge. If possible, undercut the hole slightly to lock the patch in place. Dig down until you get to a solid surface and remove loose debris from the hole's bottom. Shovel the mix into the hole, mounding it so it's about one-half inch higher than the surrounding surface. Compact the mound by tamping with a block of 2x4.

You can also pack the cold-mix by placing a scrap piece of plywood over the mound and driving back and forth over it with the front wheels of your car. Deep potholes should be filled and tamped in layers. Add some mix, tamp, then add more mix and tamp.

### Sealer:

A coat of waterproof black-top sealer, applied every two or three years, will protect the driveway from the sun, rain and snow, and will improve its appearance.

The sealer comes in 5-gallon cans and usually needs only to be stirred before use. Read the product label to determine how much area it will cover. Usually this ranges between 200 and 300 square feet, depending on the porosity of the surface.

Apply the sealer with a long-handled applicator that has a squeegee on one side and a brush on the other. Roller applicators are also available.

First, pour enough sealer from the can to work a 3- or 4-foot-wide strip across the driveway. Using the squeegee side of the applicator, spread the sealer across the driveway, working it into all tiny cracks and crevices. When the strip

has been covered, flip over to the brush side and use it to level the coating and smooth the ridges left by the squeegee. Work the brush at right angles to the path worked by the squeegee.

Don't leave puddles of sealer and don't spread it too thin. It's best to apply two coats. Read the label to determine how long to allow the sealer to dry before recoating.

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