



The Challenges of Using Concrete Around the Home

by Mike DallaChiara

Concrete is one of the most common building materials used in residential construction. While a versatile and durable product, concrete has its limitations. Namely, the product has a tendency to crack, to stain, and to have mold and mildew grow within its pores in tropical climates such as Florida. In northern climates, concrete can have problems from freezing and thawing such as spalling, which is when the top layer of the concrete flakes away due to moisture expanding beneath the surface, and heaving, which is when the concrete becomes unlevel due to the elements and substrate wearing on it.

If you looked at concrete with a microscope, you would see thousands of pores or capillaries within the product. These capillaries come from the way the product forms; they also offer mold and mildew the ability to grow since they hold moisture, making a good environment for their

generation. In addition, these pores provide the ability for anything spilled on concrete to seep below the surface and cause a permanent stain.

Historically, most homeowners would resign themselves to having concrete poured, watch it deteriorate over the next few years, and then have the old concrete torn out and replaced with a new slab. This solution not only damages the landscape surrounding the slab, but the landfills are becoming more selective on what type of fill they will accept, which is making it more expensive to get rid of concrete.

One of the best ways to maintain concrete, so that it will continue to look good for a longer period of time, is to seal off these capillaries with a concrete sealer. These sealers offer the ability to keep the elements that damage concrete over time out of the capillaries and, thus, keep the concrete looking better for a longer period of time.

Concrete sealers come in a wide array of looks and capabilities. Sealers offered

in various home improvement warehouses can seal the concrete but are limited in their durability, due to a low solids content that keeps the sealer hard for a long period of time. There are also decorative sealers available. These sealers do two things: the first is to provide a protective measure that will keep the concrete looking new for a longer time span while inhibiting the growth of mold and mildew. Sealers of this type also provide a surface that is easy to clean when things such as oil and other items are spilled on it. The second benefit offered by these decorative sealers is the ability to transform plain, gray concrete into something unique. Whether it's a clean, decorative coating or something more traditional like brick, these decorative coatings can offer a look, color, and texture to suit any homeowner's tastes.

A perfect case of how this protection not only saves the typical homeowner money in the long run but also enhances the value of their property can be found in the "Fly-In" community in Daytona. Homeowners in this prestigious community have very discerning tastes in regards to how their homes look and want only the best when enhancing the value of their upper-end residences. The decorative, acrylic concrete sealers offered in the area were perfect for what they needed. Not only did these protective sealers offer the concrete protection from mold, mildew, and the like, but they also protected the concrete from some of the more damaging fluids used by the aircraft of this unique community. The decorative, acrylic concrete sealer also enhanced the looks of these homes. The different attributes of their homeowner's styles were complemented by the decorative surfaces and allowed each of them to be unique and to accent their homes.

Concrete will always be a material of choice for construction. While it has its limitations, homeowners and condominium owners can save themselves some heartache by taking some preventative measures such as sealing the concrete to keep it around longer. Most owners will want to investigate the use of decorative sealers due to their ability to increase the value of their condominium and provide a unique look to most people's highly-prized asset.

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