SEVEN

Landscaping

Concrete Pavers

The concrete pavers used in some driveways and walks provide a flexible surface that expands and contracts with changes in temperature and humidity.

In some climates, concrete pavers are used instead of solid concrete or asphalt. Concrete pavers are easy to maintain and clean. They can be used in different decorative patterns, they don't crack, and they're easy to replace if damaged.

Care and Maintenance

Follow these care and maintenance suggestions for your home's concrete pavers.

To Replenish the Joint Sand

During the course of normal use, dirt will settle into the sand-filled joints, and driving wind, rainfall, or hose pressure may deplete joint sand. Each year, use dry, clean sand to replenish the joint sand.

To Remove Weeds

Remove weeds between pavers by hand or with herbicides. Weeds may germinate between pavers from windblown seeds.

CAUTION

When you apply herbicides, be careful to avoid damaging nearby sod and landscaping materials.

To Clean the Pavers

Use brass or plastic bristle brushes to clean the pavers. Steel bristles might loosen, rust, and then leave stains on the pavers. You can also use a soft-hair broom.

Treat stains as soon as possible. The longer they're left on the surface, the deeper they'll penetrate the pavers.

Oil stains left by cars can be difficult to remove. Use cleaners made specifically for oil stains.

Use cleaners that are made specifically for concrete pavers.

Don't use a pressure washer to clean the pavers, as it may deplete the joint sand. Instead, use a water hose with a light mist.

Avoid using acids or acidic materials that can deteriorate or stain concrete pavers.

HOME TIP

The color of your pavers may change over time as they wear from traffic or weather.

CAUTION

Many fertilizers, if left on pavers or cement, will stain.

If Your Home Is Part of a Homeowners Association (HOA)

Check with your HOA regarding maintenance, and be familiar with all HOA documentation.

Driveways, Walks, and Patios

Driveways are made from asphalt or concrete; walks and some patios are made from concrete. They require minimal but consistent maintenance.

Care and Maintenance

Follow these care and maintenance suggestions for your home's driveways, walks, and patios.

Asphalt Driveways

Apply a sealcoat mixture every two years to protect the surface, fill in crevices, maintain the appearance of your driveway, and help keep water from penetrating and deteriorating the asphalt.

Keep the driveway free from gasoline and motor oil. This will help prevent deterioration of the driveway.

Fill any cracks with asphalt filler as soon as they show.

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HOME TIP

Never park bicycles or set outdoor furniture on asphalt. The sharp ends of a kickstand or chair legs can put holes in the asphalt.

Concrete Walks and Patios

Many walks and patios are constructed from concrete. All concrete structures crack slightly as they expand and contract. Control joints have been provided in your walks and patios to minimize this cracking characteristic. **However, all concrete walks and patios develop small cracks.**

Your patio surface treatment is a blend of portland cement, silica sand, and specially formulated resins, and it may also have a 100 percent acrylic topcoat stain. The following recommendations will help you maintain a long-lasting patio surface.

To clean the surface

Wash the entire surface on a weekly basis to remove surface contaminants such as dirt, salt, and other airborne particles. Don't use more than a garden hose and water. Check with your local water authority first to make sure you are allowed to wash these surfaces.

Clean the entire surface using a household detergent once a month, if necessary. Rinse thoroughly.

To maintain the surface

Use plastic, fiberglass, or rubber-coated patio furniture to reduce damage to the surface treatment. Steel furniture can damage the coating.

Touch up any damage to the coating right away with a 100 percent acrylic topcoat stain. Immediately rinse away any acidic materials spilled on the surface using plain water.

Consider sealing your concrete surfaces with a good-quality sealer to protect the surface and the finish from water, road salt, and oil stains.

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CAUTION

Improper use of a power washer can damage concrete coatings and finishes.

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CAUTION

Avoid contact with acids or acidic materials.

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CAUTION

Don't apply salt to concrete or asphalt; salt deteriorates the surface of these materials. Use sand instead to provide traction in slippery conditions. Use floor mats near exterior doors to keep sand from being tracked into your home.

To fill small cracks in concrete flatwork

Concrete flatwork can develop small cracks ⅛- to ½-inch wide in cases of severe frost or changes in the grade around your home. These cracks are ordinarily of no serious consequence; they just detract from the appearance of your flatwork. However, small cracks can potentially lead to real problems down the road if left unsealed. Prevent them from becoming a costly repair by inspecting concrete flatwork in early spring and applying a concrete crack sealer to any small cracks. Concrete crack sealer is easy to apply and readily available at any home care center.

To repair small cracks in concrete flatwork, follow these steps:

1. Roughen any edges of the crack that are smooth using a tool such as a wire brush or cold chisel.

2. Clean out any dirt, organic matter, or concrete chips from the crack using a tool like a masonry brush, heavy paintbrush, or shop vacuum.

3. Measure the depth of the crack. If it is deeper than ½ inch, fill up the crack with sand or backer rod to within ¼ inch of the surface. If the crack isn't deeper than ½ inch, just move on to the next step.

4. Fill the crack with a concrete crack sealer available at any home care center, following the manufacturer's instructions. Overfill the crack slightly to allow for shrinkage.

HOME TIP

Apply concrete sealer when the outdoor temperature is between 45°F and 100°F. Also, apply concrete sealer only when rain isn't expected within the next 24 hours.

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Landscaping Grade

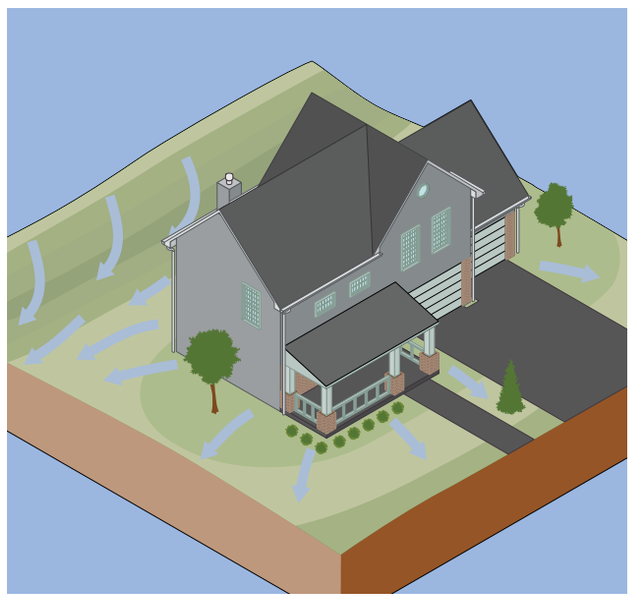
The grade – the contouring of the land around your home – is designed to provide proper drainage away from your home; it shouldn't be altered in any way that could interfere with drainage.

Landscaping Grade

Professional engineers have established the grade of your homesite to provide drainage away from the home and, in some areas, a certain amount of water retention on the site, using a system of berms (high spots) and swales (low spots). It's very important to maintain proper drainage away from the house.

Maintain the drainage slope that was established during the landscaping of your yard. Make sure any changes you make to your landscaping, such as adding a new fence or a swimming pool, don't alter the drainage of your property. In the case of major downpours, expect some water accumulation; however, this water will recede within a reasonable amount of time.

Maintain the proper slope



Termites

A proper grade away from the home also helps prevent termite infestation. Subterranean termites usually live in the soil below homes. When there isn't direct contact between the wood framing and the soil, termites build tubes or tunnels to travel from one to the other. The presence of these tubes indicates a termite infestation.

Care and Maintenance

Use these care and maintenance suggestions to prevent moisture and termite damage in your home.

To Maintain Yard Drainage

Don't change the drainage pattern on homesites designed for some water retention.

Always maintain a 6-inch minimum vertical space between the earth and any siding or stucco. If you don't, water can enter the joint between the footing and the wall material, or deteriorate the siding, brick, or stucco.

Keep drainage ditches and swales free of leaves, debris, plants, and other elements that may interfere with water flow.

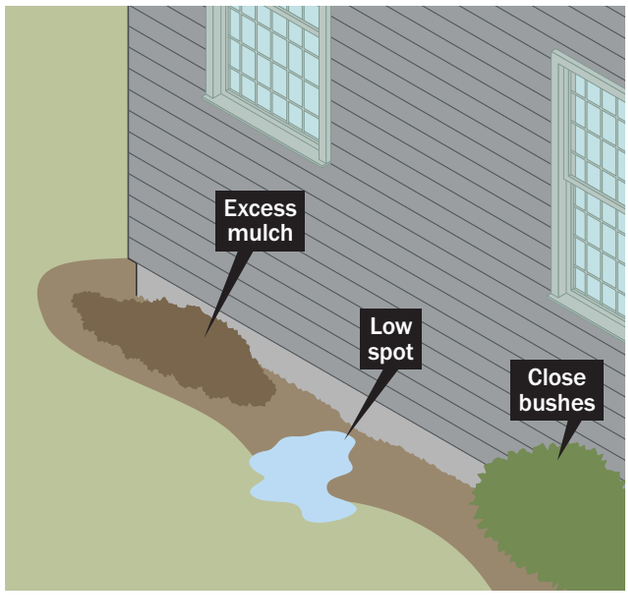
Reestablish the original grade of your homesite if the soil settles over time.

Delay any major landscaping projects until your home is at least one year old. Most soil settlement occurs during the first year.

Hire a licensed landscaper to install or modify your landscaping.

Don't plant new plants or grass too close to the house. Watering plants near the house can cause leaks into the interior and other water problems.

Drainage problems



CAUTION

Changing the drainage pattern on your property during landscaping projects could cause serious water problems.

CAUTION

Call your local utility to have buried electrical, gas, water, and telephone lines located before digging in your yard.

HOME TIP

Check for termites each year in the spring. Look for the remains of winged insects. Search the sides of the footing walls for the earthen tubes termites build to reach the wood framing above the foundation. Use the blade of a knife to test the wood for soundness. If you suspect that termites are present, consult a professional exterminator.

See also *Gutters and Downspouts* (p. 56) and *Sprinklers and Irrigation* (p. 87).

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Sprinklers and Irrigation

Your home's sprinkler and irrigation system will help keep your yard beautiful year-round.

The four main parts of your sprinkler and irrigation system are the sprinkler heads, the supply lines, the valves, and the backflow preventer. Each provides an essential function.

The sprinkler heads are the fixed heads in your landscape that spray water in either a fan-shaped pattern or in rotating streams. The supply lines are the irrigation pipes running beneath your yard from the sprinkler heads to the water source. The valves allow you to shut off the water to your sprinkler and irrigation system. The backflow preventer prevents water within your irrigation system from backing up the pipes and entering your drinking water.

Care and Maintenance

Follow these care and maintenance suggestions for your home's sprinkler system.

Winterize the sprinkler system in the fall. Turn off the timer, and drain the water from the pipes.

Restart the sprinkler system in the spring. Turn on the timer and the master valve.

Check for sticking valves.

Inspect for leaks at the connections.

Check for missing or damaged sprinkler heads and emitters.

Flush out the sprinkler system twice a year.

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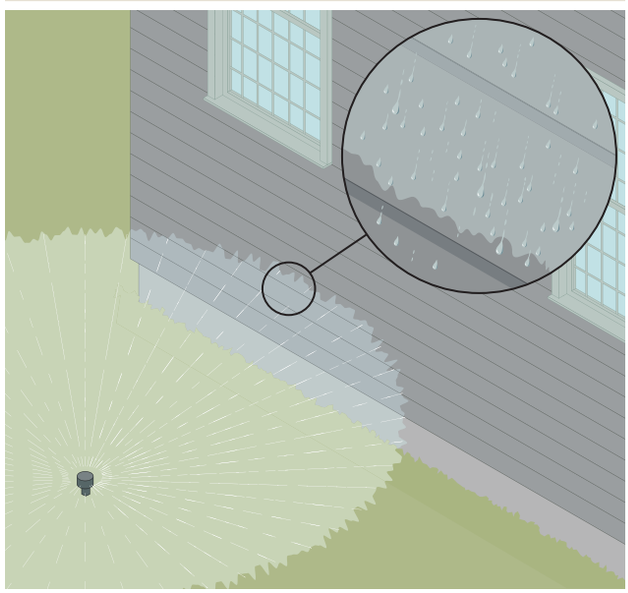
HOME TIP

Some areas require adhering to the regular watering schedule determined by the local water authority. Check with your local water authority to make sure you are in compliance.

To Prevent Water Damage to Your Home

Make sure the sprinklers don't spray the house or the area near the foundation; it could damage the exterior or cause leaks.

Don't spray the house!



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Swimming Pool

Your pool will be enjoyed by your family and guests for many years with proper care and maintenance.

Care and Maintenance

Follow these care and maintenance suggestions for your home's swimming pool.

Initialization

You've received a kit that includes full operating instructions, a broom, a vacuum and hose, and a chemical test kit. Please refer to your pool pamphlets for instructions.

It's possible that your pool hasn't reached its initial chemical balance yet because it was completed recently. Don't add any chemicals to your pool until it's time to begin the routine maintenance program per the manufacturer's instructions. Adding chemicals too early could damage the pool finish.

CAUTION

Don't put floating tablets in the skimmer basket as a way of adding chemicals to your pool. They might damage the finish when the pump isn't running.

Child Barrier

The fabric child barrier is an important safety device. Use it whenever there's a risk of a person or pet accidentally falling into the pool. Also, don't dispose of this barrier, since it could be required if you sell your home.

CAUTION

Make sure your family and guests are aware that your pool is shallow and unsuitable for diving.

Professional Maintenance

You can hire a pool service company to maintain your pool. A pool supply company can help guide you in choosing the appropriate chemicals to balance your pool water and in servicing the pool.

Chemical Balance

Test the pool water with your chemical test kit. Then, add just the chemicals necessary to bring the water up to the optimum test levels.

Replace the testing chemicals, called reagents, in your test kit periodically to ensure accurate test results. You might wish to purchase a more elaborate test kit than the starter kit.

Add chemicals to your pool carefully and evenly throughout the pool while the pump is running. Don't pour chemicals in only one place.

Pump Clock

Keep the pump clock set to run at least six hours a day in the winter and at least eight hours a day during the warmest part of the day in the summer.

Warranty

Keep all testing results with your records so you can refer to them if you need to make a warranty claim. Your pool's warranty doesn't cover the following: discoloring or staining due to local water conditions, rust, oxidation, or staining caused by debris in the pool, improper chemicals or chemical balance, and failure to maintain the pool.

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SERVICE TIP

Have your pool water professionally tested periodically. If you feel that you need more assistance, contact your local pool supply company.

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