

A revamped driveway does wonders for property

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When you pull into your driveway, do you feel like you're on an obstacle course, dodging holes, bumps and heaving cracks? Has your driveway become so drab with age and neglect that it's an eyesore? If you answered yes to these two questions, you may want to perk up your drive by resurfacing or replacing it altogether. You'll find that a revamped driveway can do wonders for the overall appearance and value of your home.

There are a number of attractive options to choose from when considering paving, including asphalt, concrete, loose fill, and brick. Turf blocks (hollow cement blocks containing grass) can also be used to create a lawn-like effect.

Many homeowners are now installing interlocking brick to give their driveway a distinctive, stately look that offers more color and texture than some of the more traditional paving.

When revamping or replacing your driveway, keep in mind that the larger your driveway is, the more it will cost you to maintain it. Also try to avoid putting new sections too close to existing trees and shrubs.

Pavement should be slightly sloped as well, to make sure that water runs off. There should also be a slope across the width, so that water does not pond. This can be achieved by raising the centre a bit so the water rolls off both sides.

ASPHALT

The most common and popular material used for driveways is asphalt. If properly installed and maintained, this black surface can give you many years of reliable service. But keep in mind that it radiates a lot of heat in the summertime. Damage can occur from frost and oil leaks. It may also become gouged easily from sharp objects like bicycle kickstands and ladders.

A poor installation job will result in fairly quick deterioration and fading. Make sure you hire professionals to do the job. A sturdy gravel sub-base must be installed

for new asphalt driveways or those that are being replaced.

Any future cracks and holes in asphalt can be fixed with special driveway sealer and patching material sold at your local hardware store.

It is recommended that a sealer be applied about every two to three years, to compensate for wear and tear.

LOOSE FILL

Loose fill is another type of paving and consists of several (usually crushed limestone), or pebbles. It is generally not as expensive as other paving, but may be harder to keep clear of weeds and yard debris.

A gravel or pebble drive may also be more difficult to maintain in winter months because the stones have a tendency to get mixed with snow and become displaced as the driveway is being shoveled. Stones or pebbles can also become dislodged by your car tires as you pull in and out of your driveway every day.

However, a loose fill driveway can provide an attractive contrast to adjacent lawns and flowerbeds. It can also provide a very good base for a future asphalt or concrete driveway.

CONCRETE

Concrete is another paving option. It can be more expensive than other driveway materials, but can

withstand a lot of weight, is extremely durable and doesn't require a lot of upkeep.

Made up of cement, aggregate and water, concrete is a good substance for a driveway containing curves and corners. Installation of a concrete driveway is not an easy task and should be left to professionals. A solid sub-surface must be in place before the concrete can be added.

If you plan to resurface an old concrete driveway, make sure you patch any cracks or holes before applying the new material.

BRICK

Brick, particularly the interlocking variety, is a popular option to more traditional paving. Bricks can be laid in a number of interesting patterns, and many colors are available.

Although bricks are more expensive than traditional paving, many homeowners enjoy the appearance of a brick driveway and the numerous patterns that can be used to create a distinctive look.

As with other types of paving, a good sub-base is necessary before the bricks can be laid.

Carpet care very important

When you make any investment, you want to protect it, and a home furnishings investment is no different. You should take care in selecting items for your home. Since you will be using them every day, it's important to you that they continue to look good and last.

Carpeting is a major investment and one of the most visible design elements in the home. The best way to protect the appearance and prolong the life of your carpet is to clean it regularly.

When dirt particles are trampled deep into carpet pile, they tear the fibres and ruin the look. Vacuuming on a regular basis is the most important thing you can do to protect your carpet.

CARPET CARE

Carpets should be lightly vacuumed (two passes with the machine) twice a week and receive a thorough vacuuming (four passes) once a week.

Don't worry about vacuuming too much - it will not harm your carpet. In fact, it's best if the vacuum has a beater bar to agitate the pile and bring the dirt up to the surface for easy removal.

If your carpet starts to look dull, it's probably time for a major cleaning. Most carpets need shampooing every one to three years. If you are a do-it-yourselfer, products and equipment for thorough cleaning can be bought or rented.

There are four basic methods of all-over carpet cleaning: steam cleaning, wet shampooing, aerosol form sprays and powder sprays.

STEAM CLEANING

Steam cleaning is the do-it-yourself method closest to a professional job. The process employs a high-pressure jet sprayer that distributes hot detergent solution deep into the carpet pile, then immediately sucks up the dirt and water. These machines can be rented at many large supermarkets.

Steam cleaning is especially good for deep piles because it doesn't crush the carpet fibres. However, it's a slower process than other methods, and the equipment costs more to rent.

SHAMPOO

With wet shampooing the carpet is wetted down with liquid detergent, then brushed in with a rotary brush machine (also easily rented).

This method involves more work, however, and is more prone to problems than steam cleaning.

If the water-detergent solution is allowed to stay on the carpet too long, it can cause mildew, damage to the backing and damage to the floors underneath.

For lightly soiled carpets, an aerosol foam spray or powder spray will do the job. Both are applied to the carpet, sponged or brushed in, allowed to dry and vacuumed.

STAIN REMOVAL

If you have a spot stain on your carpet, it should be removed before general cleaning. Attend to stains as soon after they appear as possible. The faster you treat stains, the better chance you have of getting rid of them.

Different stains require different treatments, but the first step is always to blot or scrape up as much of the spill as possible before treating the stain.

If it's an oil-based stain, like asphalt, butter, crayon, lotion or ink, apply a commercial spot remover (follow directions on label carefully), blot, wash with detergent and rinse with clear water. Always blot excess moisture before allowing the spot to dry.

For deep stains, like blood, ketchup, chocolate or egg, first use a detergent and then ammonia. Next, apply more detergent, rinse with clear water and blot.

Need a cleaner?

Detergent and vinegar will remove stains from beer, coffee, berries, candy (sugar) and fruit juice.

If you have a stain that you can't remove yourself, or if you decide your carpet needs a professional cleaning, check with your friends to find a reputable cleaner who is up-to-date on the latest procedures and chemicals. Get a few estimates before you make a final decision.



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