

Caring for your paving

If you've invested in a new patio, path or driveway or inherited one when you moved in, you'll want to take great care of it to keep it looking its best. Taking care of your paving should be it straight forward and well worth the effort.

How to keep my paving clean

- How much your stone will need cleaning all depends on several variables: - the type of stone you have, the position of your garden, over hanging trees etc. Porous paving like some sandstones (especially honed or smooth) in shadier patches will retain more moisture and need cleaning more often. Porcelain and sealed stone will need less cleaning as there are less porous.
- Even for low maintenance choices like porcelain, regular cleaning is still a good idea to keep on top of every day marks left by vehicles, food, grease from barbecues and acidic animal droppings.
- Use a stiff brush with warm soapy water or an all-purpose non-acid based patio shampoo (always checking that it is suitable for your type of paving)
- Jet wash with care. Avoid jet washing on full nozzle spray on soft natural stones and be careful to get too close to any joints. Light jet wash concrete only occasionally to avoid damaging the surface of the paving.

Occasionally issues may crop up with your paving, either immediately after installation or over time. Here is a guide to the most common problems we tend to see and how to treat and avoid them.

Paving trouble-shooter

What's the problem?	Most likely to be found in	Possible cause	How to treat	How to avoid
Algae and moss 	Natural stone Concrete	More porous stones and shady, damper areas are prone to organic growth like algae and moss as they stay wet for longer.	Wash regularly and scrape off thicker growth. Use a specialist cleaner for stubborn algae and moss, like Easy Algae Remover or Patio Black Spot Remover.	Sealing porous stone can be a good idea to help protect it. Ensure good drainage and an adequate fall in paving (between 1:60 to 1:100 depending on the type of paving, the finish of the surface and size of the area).
Acid staining 	Natural stone	Cement cleaner or brick acid.	Acid staining is generally permanent and best avoided.	Be extremely careful when using acid cleaners that you follow the manufacturers' instructions fully. Never use them on natural stone and seek advice from a professional if you are in any doubt*.
Black spot 	Natural stone Concrete	Spores of black lichen land on paving and will develop after two years to form round spots which, if untreated, will grow wider and deeper into the stone paving.	Treating black spot quickly with specialist cleaners such as Patio Black Spot Remover can remove stains effectively. Make sure you choose the right product for your type of paving.	Patio Black Spot Preventer can be used annually to prevent black spot establishing. Sealing paving will also help prevent black spot from establishing.
Blooming and efflorescence 	Natural stone Concrete	Blooming, efflorescence and 'salting' are chemical reactions where naturally occurring salts or deposits in the paving are dissolved in water and make their way out to the surface of the slab. The result is white patches which can be powdery or crystal-like. It can occur spasmodically over time and is more likely when paving is wet and takes a long time to dry.	Blooming and efflorescence are not structural concerns and generally disappear with time. There are specialist products that can treat these deposits but always seek professional advice before using any product, especially when treating limestone*.	Sealing natural stone can reduce the likelihood of blooming and efflorescence. If applying a sealer after installation, use a breathable type or wait a minimum of six months for paving to fully dry and for blooming efflorescence to disappear.

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Calcium deposits 	Natural stone	These tend to be formed from calcium deposits which naturally occur in slate, more typically natural slate. These may be released in damper conditions and come and go over time.	Calcium deposits are a natural and aesthetic characteristic which do not affect the performance of the stone. They can be removed using products such as Eff-Erayza and Easy Mortar Stain and Calcium Remover*.	
Cement or mortar stains 	Any paving	This can occur through accidental slips or spillages during installation.	You can use a chisel and wire brush, but take great care not to scratch the surface. Non-acid based cleaners like Easy Mortar Stain and Calcium Remover can be used on most paving. Acid based cleaners like Eff-Erayza can be effective on some concrete or porcelain paving (never natural stone). Always take extreme care to follow manufacturers' instructions to prevent permanent damage*.	Avoid spillages and work cleanly as you go to avoid any cement or mortar hardening on the paving surface. Pre-sealing stone makes it much easier to clean mortar stains whilst you work.
Colour variation 	Any paving	Colour variation is characteristic of any natural stone and can enhance its appearance. Slight colour variation can also occur in batches of concrete and porcelain products due to production processes. Paving can look patchy in colour if packs haven't been mixed.		When laying several packs of the same paving product, always mix randomly when laying, to achieve a blended look.
Differential weathering 	Concrete	Inconsistent drying during and after manufacture can form darker patches on concrete slabs. These can form in the centre during curing, or on the outside if slabs have been wrapped in plastic. Weather can also affect the paving when newly laid.	This is often to be expected on lower budget concrete products and the effects are not detrimental to the product long term. They become less obvious or disappear as the paving weathers over time.	

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Fading  <p><i>This Black Limestone has been partially treated with a colour enhancer sealer</i></p>	Natural stone Concrete	All natural stone is likely to fade over time, and for some the effect is more pronounced, such as Blue-Black and Andhra Grey Limestones, which fade to a lighter colour when exposed to British weather.	If you'd like to maintain a darker colour you can use a colour-enhancer sealer such as Dry-Treat Intensifia, Back to Black or Easy Slate and Limestone Enhancer and Easy Sandstone Enhancer.	Colour enhancing sealers and Dry-Treat Stain-Proof can slow the fading process.
Fertiliser staining 	Any paving	Fertilisers and moss killers contain ferrous sulphate which can leave traces of iron on paving next to lawns.	Fertiliser stains tend to disappear over time. If you don't want to wait follow the advice for Rust Stains below.	
Leaf staining 	Any paving	If fallen leaves are left on paving, leaf resin can leach out as they break down, causing staining.	Stains can often be removed with a stiff brush and patio shampoo or, for stubborn stains Hannafin Oxy-Klenza, S-Tech Stone and Masonry Cleaner or Patio Black Spot Remover.	Avoid using light coloured porous stones, especially under trees. Sweep patios regularly.
Oil stains 	Any paving	Oil from cars, lawn mowers or food can quickly leave unsightly stains on patios and driveways.	Remove oil stains as soon as possible to increase chances of success. Soak up with cloth or paper. Scrub with strong detergent repeatedly and wash with plenty of water. Stubborn stains can be removed with Easy Grease and Oil Away.	Always identify and remove the source of any oil leak if possible. Sealing paving can help protect against oil stains.
Picture-framing 	Natural stone Concrete	Excess moisture held in grout can cause minerals to leach into the paving and leave a distinctive dark stain around the edges of each slab. Picture-framing tends to be found in porous paving and where a porous jointing compound has been used.		Pre-sealing paving slabs significantly reduces the amount of water they absorb and therefore the effects of picture-framing. Sealing paving and joints after installation can also reduce the effects of picture-framing.

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Reflective staining 	Natural stone	Spot bedding can cause moisture and minerals to travel through the paving at different rates, causing patches of staining that reflect the mortar.	Re-laying spot-bedded stone means removing and reapplying a full bed of mortar, but this is no guarantee as normally the paving has been permanently marked and the stains cannot be removed.	Always use a full bed of mortar for laying paving.
Resin staining 	Any paving	Applying a two-part epoxy resin or a single part polymeric resin grout incorrectly or at incorrect temperatures can leave a resin film over the paving and joints.	Damage can be permanent so is best avoided.	Always follow instructions for resin carefully. Use plenty of water with epoxy resin grout and ensure you apply it at the correct temperatures. Some porous stone such as honed sandstone and granite are at higher risk of resin stain so benefit from pre-sealing.
Rust and brown spots 	Natural stone Concrete	Iron deposits leach out of some types of natural stone. Paler sandstones tend to be most affected, but it can be found in limestone, granite and other natural stone. Rust stains can also be caused by moss-killer and patio furniture.	Rust stains tend to disappear over time. If you don't want to wait, non-acid based rust cleaners such as Easy4Rust can be used on all natural stone. Or an acid-based cleaner like Eff-Erayza is suitable for some paving*.	
Spalling 	Any paving	Paving can chip around the edges where it has been butt-jointed; i.e. where adjacent slabs have been butted up to each other with little or no mortar to cushion them. Chipping, crumbling or flaking can also occur in patches, where water in slight cracks freezes and thaws repeatedly, causing pieces to split off. This is more likely where stone is porous and softer, or stone that has been jet washed.		Allow a minimum joint width of 5mm. Always check whether light jet-washing is suitable for your paving. Sealing porous stone will also help to prevent spalling.

When should I seal my paving?

Sealing natural stone can be a great preventative step to protect your investment from common problems like stains and weather damage. Certain sealers will also enhance the appearance of stone and reduce fading over time.

When to apply:

- Sealers can be applied before or after installation.
- If you are using a non-breathable sealer after installation, we advise waiting for a minimum of six months after the paving is laid so that all moisture and salts can come out of the paving first. Sealers are generally best applied during the warmest and driest months, usually between May and October.
- Some breathable sealers can be applied to paving as soon as it is laid as they allow moisture to pass through but always seek professional advice before applying.

What to expect:

- Sealed pavers may need to be resealed every 3-5 years if using a water-based sealer and 2-3 years if using an acrylic sealer. When resealing pavers, be sure to use the same sealer that was originally applied to prevent an adverse reaction between two different products (this will spoil the finish).
- The finish of the sealer will depend on the type of stone, with less porous stone holding a glossy finish more easily.
- Joint stabilising sealers can have the added benefit of reducing weed growth and damage to jointing from weather and insects.

We offer a **pre-sealing service** for natural stone so when your paving is delivered, it is ready to install in any weather. This can also help prevent problems during installation.

* Using cleaners and sealers

When using chemical cleaners and sealers on paving:

- Read the label before buying to make sure the product is suitable
- Read instructions very carefully and always seek advice from a professional if you are at all unsure of anything
- Wear protective clothing such gloves, boots and overalls
- Ensure those working in the same area are protected too
- Make sure you are outside or have good ventilation
- Always test a small, hidden area first
- Be careful not to damage, contaminate or stain any adjoining material
- When diluting acids, ALWAYS add acid to water and not water to acid
- Safely dispose of any clothing that is contaminated with chemicals
- Dispose of any run off material carefully and responsibly.