



**SOTA**  
LANDSCAPING

## Paver Care Guide

## **General Care**

The care of high-quality concrete products is similar to that of any product exposed to the elements 365 days per year. Just the way you get your yard ready for different seasons, the same applies to paving stones. They too require care.

The general care of your hardscape products is minimal, but important. Certain environmental circumstances may involve some additional care, but being consistent with the upkeep avoids more work in the future. Note that concrete is porous. When leaves fall onto your pavers, sweep them off to avoid organic stains. When you see dirt/clay on your pavement, take a minute to hose it off and keep it clean.

Mild cleaning using various household products such as detergents, water and product-specific chemicals is sometimes necessary (like cleaning patio furniture, a vehicle's chrome, plastic, or paint, etc.) to enhance their presence and charm. Protectants of all types are available for additional resistance against acid rain, stains and nature's worst. For questions on industry-specific cleaners and protectants, , you may visit <https://www.alliancegator.com/> or reach out to your local distributor or contractor.

## **Cleaning Basics**

### *How Often*

Clean your paved area when you see that it is necessary. Again, sweep off leaves regularly to avoid staining. Hose down your pavers to remove any dirt, clay, or debris that have stuck on. When the snow melts, a thorough, overall spring cleaning with a light product shampoo or dishwashing soap works best to get your pavers ready to enjoy.

### *What to use*

Cleaners are sold for different purposes. For maximum results, be sure to use professional or properly diluted household products. We recommend that you start with the mildest or least invasive cleaner and work your way toward a stronger one. Sometimes two or three applications of a mild cleaner is all you need. If you choose to use an industry cleaner, be sure to read and follow the labels carefully. We recommend Alliance Gator or Flexlock hardscape cleaning products.

### ***What to avoid***

Avoid wire brushes and strong acids like sulfuric and muriatic as this can do serious damage to a concrete paver. Acids should be limited to professional use only.

### ***About power washers***

The improper use of a pressure washer may permanently etch the surface of your paving stones, steps or retaining walls. Pressure washers should be used by professionals only for the cleaning of your paved surface. The use of a syphon tip is highly recommended. Narrow tips may cause irreversible damage. Consider the use of cleaners and detergents in conjunction with a pressure washer to obtain the best results. Often, cleaning solutions are effective for stain removal and general care with very little water pressure required. Do note that a pressure washer should never be used on Wet Cast products. **\*\*Damage caused by power washers is not covered under our warranty.**

### ***Don't forget about the joints***

The joint or space between paving stones are the most vulnerable area, especially after a new installation. The two most common issues in jointing material are organics and erosion. We recommend that paving stone joints be filled with polymeric sand, joining compounds, or a joint stabilizing protectant on traditional sand joint.

Damp, shaded areas between stones are prone to moss and weed growth. Moss in your joints? Try using 3 parts water to 1 part chlorine bleach to remove it. Apply the mixture with a watering can or syphon sprayer, scrub with a nylon brush and rinse. To minimize the problem, consider professional advice to correct the moisture that encourages the growth of moss. Commercial products do exist that can help remove moss, mold and mildew such as Alliance Gator M3 Cleaner. This product also inhibits new growth.

When using a garden hose to clean the joints of a paved area, direct the hose diagonally at the surface on a 30-degree angle. Never direct the hose parallel to the joints as the strength of the water stream may be too harsh and may dislocate the joining material.

### ***Fire pit burner care***

The purpose of the fire pit burner sleeve is to provide protection to your concrete product against direct flames within your fire feature.

Although this product is engineered to withstand a certain level of heat, it is possible that the painted surface may experience chipping and rust development over time. This occurrence is not indicative of a defect, but rather a natural effect of exposure to fire.

As a solution, we suggest utilizing a high-quality, high heat enamel spray paint to touch up your fire pit sleeve as needed. This will help to maintain its aesthetic appeal and protect against further deterioration.

## **Managing Stains**

### ***Foliage and organic debris***

Concrete is a porous material that can absorb pigments from leaves, petals and buds from trees/shrubs. Organic stains can be tough to remove if they stay on the pavers beneath the snow or when left on damp surfaces for a period of time. We recommend that you sweep away dead leaves regularly. If you live in an area that is prone to more foliage, consider protecting your paved area.

Using a protectant can make your pavement more stain resistant and easier to keep clean. Organic Stain Remover also removes mildew, algae, kills moss and tough stains from tannins.

### ***Foliage and organic debris***

Some fertilizers contain iron that can leave stains on the surface of your patio. After spreading lawn or plant fertilizer, be sure to sweep the surface of your pavement to prevent rust spots.

Rust stains from steel or iron, such as patio furniture, fertilizer or high iron content water (irrigation) can be removed using professional products such as Gator Rust Remover or household iron removers.

### ***Food & beverage***

Food or beverages (like wine) spilled on the pavement should be removed quickly and the area should be rinsed with hot water immediately. Liquid dish soap or laundry detergent will remove most food and beverage stains on pavers. Mix a solution of the soap or detergent with hot water and gently brush the stain away with a cloth or a soft-bristled brush that you have dipped into the mixture.

### ***Oil & grease***

Light oil and grease stains can generally be removed with an application of liquid dish soap. Directly apply the soap to the affected area and let sit for 20-30 minutes, scrub with a nylon brush and rinse with hot water. Re-apply and repeat until the stain is removed. If it is a fresh stain, lightly rub the area with a clean rag or paper towel.

If an area is heavily soiled, a professional product such as Gator Oil and Grease Removal<sup>®</sup> may be used. Please refer to product instructions.

### ***Directions***

- A. Pre-soak area to be treated and let water absorb into pavers.
- B. Apply cleaning solution in manageable areas at a time.
- C. Scrub area with nylon brush or broom.
- D. Rinse area and repeat as needed.

### ***Notes***

- Clean in cool temperatures and out of direct sunlight.
- Always test in a small inconspicuous area.
- Don't allow soap to dry.
- The goal is to remove the stain without harming the surface of the pavers. Therefore, patience and multiple applications may be required.

## **What you need to know**

### *EFFLORESCENCE AND WHITE MINERAL DEPOSIT*

Efflorescence is a whitish residue that sometimes appears on the surface of concrete products.

### *EFFLORESCENCE CAN OCCUR A FEW DIFFERENT TIMES:*

- Present on the pallet upon delivery
- Immediately following installation
- A few weeks after installation,
- A few months after installation

It may appear randomly or in certain areas and will be more pronounced on dark colored pavers and walls. The white haze may give the impression that the color is fading. When wet, the white disappears, and the color of the pavers and walls is enhanced. When dry, the white haze reappears.

Occasionally, the salts from: cement, water, aggregate, and sand (concrete) , bedding, base, and soil that are embedded are dislodged by water and transported (via vapor pressure or capillary action) to the surface where water evaporates, and salts are deposited. The deposited salt will dissipate naturally and weather and traffic off.

It is common in concrete and other masonry products that contain cement. Typically, efflorescence will stop developing in approximately 90 days but could take 18 to 24 months after the manufacturing process. The concrete is experiencing a natural process which is not harmful to the product used.

There is no reason to be concerned that pavers and walls are damaged or defective. The concrete products are experiencing a natural process. Some projects experience this more, some experience it less. It is a condition in all cement-based and many other paving products.

### ***Testing for efflorescence***

A way to test for efflorescence is to wet the surface. If the white residue disappears but reappears when dry, it is water soluble efflorescence. If the deposit is still visible when wet, it may be a different type of mineral deposit like lime or calcium. Those types of mineral deposits (although not detrimental to the product) should be cleaned by or professional grade product.

#### **Recommendations**

Although we do not recommend cleaning efflorescence, there are mild removers commercially available through local distributors. \*\*Please note that improper use of efflorescence cleaners can risk damaging the product. This is not a prescribed method and it may void your product warranty.

Most cleaners contain acid and detergents, be sure to follow all directions and environmental regulations. Careless or improper cleaning can result in injury, damage and discoloration of the concrete. Always conduct a test in an inconspicuous area or a leftover piece before applying any cleaner to the site. If uncomfortable cleaning this yourself, hire a professional contractor. Refer to your hardscape installer or dealer for referrals.

Recommended efflorescence cleaners: Gator Efflorescence Cleaner® or FlexLock Efflorescence Cleaner®. Concrete product manufacturers are unable to warrant against the presence of efflorescence.

Polymeric sand haze commonly called "poly haze" is often confused for efflorescence. Poly haze is the residue of polymer based jointing sand left on the surface of the pavement typically due to moisture on installation, improper application, or inadequate removal. To determine if it's poly haze use boiling hot water from stove or coffee maker on an inconspicuous unit. The stain will largely dissipate.

## *Examples of Efflorescence*



## *Protectants*

Applying a protectant to pavers, slabs and walls can help enhance the beauty of your products much like waxing a car.

Doing so can also help make the product be more stain- resistant.

Depending on your environment, it may be a good idea to protect your paved area. While this will not prevent stains, it will make it easier to clean. Think of it as a protective barrier. The stain sits on top of the protectant instead of penetrating into the concrete. Note that you must completely clean off debris and efflorescence off your paved surface before adding a protectant.

Although there are many different types of protectants on the market, there are two categories to remember.

**\*\*Please note that using the wrong protectant stripper can pre-maturely age the product.**

## *Penetrating protectants*

- Should be used in areas that are prone to stains, such as a grilling area or pavement surround by trees
- Generally last 5-7 or 7-10 years
- Penetrates deeper into the product if clean and dry
- Better long term choice

### ***Film forming protectants***

- For aesthetic appearance
- May enhance product color
- Gives a wet look
- Deepens or darkens color
- Generally lasts 1-5 years
- Does not penetrate deep into the product

### ***Winter care***

Ready-mix concrete and asphalt pavements can be plowed and shoveled. Using reasonable amounts of de-icing salts or other agents (sodium chloride, calcium chloride or magnesium chloride) to melt snow and ice will not harm paving stones. De-icing salts should be applied sparingly on areas that have snow or ice only (never directly on the product as this can damage the stones over time). Do not use products that contain a blend of chemicals.

When using a contractor for snow removal, it is recommended to verify that their equipment uses Teflon blades or rubber blades to avoid scratching the pavers. For permeable pavements, it is not recommended to use traction aid grit (for slip/skid resistance) as they can scratch the surface of the stones, clog the system and reduce permeability.

When preparing your outdoor paved area for the winter season (including the closing of your pool), keeping your products equally exposed to the elements is important. For example, a pool cover installed over a portion of the

pool deck (i.e. pool coping and first few feet of paved surface) for months at a time will affect the product's exposure to light, the elements, dirt and debris. This may result in a difference in appearance over time. Uniform exposure to the elements will keep your project looking great for years to come.