How to care for your new concrete

Why Maintain Concrete?

In most cases concrete is a durable, long lasting product without maintenance. So it often raises eyebrows when the subject of maintaining concrete is brought up.

Properly maintaining concrete, however, can greatly extend the life of the concrete and the beauty of the concrete: plain concrete can look clean and bright - instead of oil stained and grimy. Decorative Concrete can look the same after years of enjoyment as it did when it was brand new - instead of faded, oil stained, and dirty.

Properly maintaining the concrete protects your investment in concrete, particularly if you've taken the initiative and incurred the expense of pouring decorative concrete.

Concrete Darwin has had a long experience with concrete, and will help you understand how to preserve and protect the beauty of your new concrete. Please feel free to call us if you have questions about caring for your concrete. Once your freshly laid concrete is completed, some simple care and maintenance measures will help assure you of a long life of beauty and service.

Hot Weather Effects on Finished Concrete

Darwin a beautiful place but let’s face it, it’s so damn hot! Unfortunately, even if the hot weather does not arrive until well after the concrete cures, the potential for damage such as cracks or divots remains, due to expansion from sustained heat at the surface. As sunlight beams down on concrete surfaces, water within the porous material starts to expand. The relatively rapid expansion rate can open up cracks through the concrete slab in an instant.

Concrete Darwin has the experience and knowledge to deal with such issues but we will also give you tips on curing your concrete once we have completed your job. Below are some helpful hints to insure the quality of your concrete in our harsh conditions.
What to do when we have been and gone?

It all starts as soon as the concrete crews and equipment are gone. Concrete is an amazing material. Soft and easy enough to manipulate during installation, it soon sets into a solid, stone-like material. This process called setting and curing, doesn't happen instantly, however. While the concrete will become firm and hard fairly quickly, it remains relatively weak until completely cured, normally 28 days after placing. How you treat your new concrete now will affect it for years to come.

Curing - Curing green concrete is considered one of if not the most important thing to insure your concrete wont crack. To cure your concrete, effectively means to slow the whole drying process down, to retain moisture in the slab will gain strength and delay shrinkage until the concrete is strong enough to resist shrinkage cracking.

When the Concrete Darwin crew leaves your site it is very important to keep your concrete wet, this is the most effective curing method for preventing moisture evaporation. The easiest way you can do this is hose your concrete as much as you can for 2 -7 days after complete, another good way is to set a sprinkler or light mist spray and move it around your whole concrete area regularly throughout the curing process.

Another good way to cure your concrete is to flood or dam your concrete slab with a sand perimeter – although very affective we do not recommend this on a decorative or coloured slab as the sand or dam material may stain or discolour your concrete.

Try to keep off it - To keep your concrete from cracking, it is advisable stay off of it for a minimum of 7 days after installation for normal traffic and 14- 30 days after installation for any heavy equipment. The concrete is considered “Green’ and needs to cure and harden before it can be opened up for normal use. If you plan on doing any type of construction on your property that requires heavy construction equipment or heavy trucks, it is advised they stay off your concrete for at least 30 days after installation. Also, it is important to keep skidsteers or loaders from turning on the concrete causing tire tracking and permanent scuff marks on the surface.
Quick Tips

Continuing Care & Maintenance - The beauty of choosing a concrete for your project is how little maintenance and care it really needs. Cleaning your concrete periodically and keeping it sealed are the key components of any good maintenance program. How often you clean and reseal will largely depend on the conditions the concrete is exposed to, especially weather extremes, sunlight intensity and the amount of foot or vehicle traffic.

Control Plantings - Trees and other plants with big root systems can cause problems if they are planted too close to your concrete. Roots can grow up through the cement, or even raise the concrete, cracking it and causing it to break off and crumble. Weeds may sprout in any controlled cracks, expansion joints or cracks that may develop, but can be treated with spot herbicides.

Clean Up Spills - Using a pressure washer and degreasing chemicals to spray and clean the area immediately after spilling oil, grease or other stains is the best bet for removing these types of stains (make sure you follow manufactures recommendation on degreasers or the like and insure the chemicals are suitable on concrete surfaces). Act fast to prevent permanent staining, oil stains can also gather dust and grime – Although oil and dust stains will not cause any structural damage to your concrete they can cause unsightly permanent stains.

Avoid Heavy Loads - Keep heavy trucks and equipment off your driveway. Although concrete is durable, residential driveways and patio slabs are not generally designed to support heavy vehicles (large trucks) and large equipment.

Apply Sealant - You can do this job yourself or may have already engaged Concrete Darwin to do this for you. If you do this yourself carefully following the instructions on the sealing product, since spread rates differ. If you prefer to have sealing done professionally, feel free to call us for our professional opinion about sealers. Generally you would seal coloured or exposed aggregate concrete, you can also colour plain concrete with coloured sealers in a wide range of colours.

Long term care - Never allow water to undermine the concrete slabs. This can wash out the gravel/sand base and lead to an uneven slab or cracks to appear. If wear shows in high traffic areas (as sometimes happens after five or more years), you may wish to clean the surface and seal it using a common water repellent concrete sealer for further protection.