

Cleaning and removing oil from concrete

Oil dripped onto your concrete driveway from your car could cause an ugly mess. Because of the permeable nature of concrete, oil will in reality permeate into the concrete so the sooner you remove it, the better your chances and the lighter the job. Whenever oil is permitted to sit on the surface for an extensive time period, you may determine it nearly impossible to entirely get rid of.

To clean fresh oil from your driveway, cover the oil blot with a layer of a clay-based cat litter or sawdust. Permit the cat litter or sawdust adequate time to absorb the oil, which can require a day or more. Entirely brush the concrete free of the litter or sawdust and discard it properly. If the discoloration is still present, brush it with a solution of detergent and water applying a nylon scrubbing brush. Rinse off thoroughly.

Dry concrete also makes a fine agent to soak up oil stains when applied in conjunction with cat litter. Permit the litter to absorb the surface oil, sweep away the oil soaked litter and then spread a good covering of dry cement over the stain and let it sit on the surface for a day or so. The dry concrete will actually absorb the stain right out of the surface of the driveway. Be careful of weather conditions, as rain will cause the dry concrete to solidify.

Older oil stains that have penetrated the surface of the concrete are much harder to remove. Follow the above procedures to soak up the surface oil. Make a paste of two parts hydrated lime powder and one part turpentine. Spread the paste over the surface of the remaining oil stain covering a larger patch than the actual stain. Cover the stain with plastic sheeting to help prevent the turpentine from evaporating. Leave the poultice covering on the stain overnight. Scrape off the paste and follow with a good scrubbing of detergent and water. You may need to repeat this poultice procedure as more of the stain leaches up to the surface of the concrete.

A popular cleaner that has proven effective in the removal of oil stains from concrete is called trisodium phosphate also known as TSP. TSP is sold in powdered form and can be used in place of detergent to scrub the stain; however, it is not recommended as a mixture for a poultice as dangerous fumes can result. Sprinkle the TSP over the stain, add enough water to make a paste and scrub the stain with a good nylon brush.

Some people prefer more mechanical methods to remove oil stains from concrete. They can range from sand blasting, grinding, and steam cleaning. Others will argue the an acid treatment, such as a solution of muriatic acid and water, will remove an oil stain. However, instead of removing the oil stain, muriatic acid will actually dissolve some of the surface of the concrete and may alter the appearance after it dries.

Tips:

Clean oil from the surface of the concrete immediately to prevent deep stains.

Properly dispose of all oil soaked cleaning rags and soaking agents in an environmentally safe method.

Use proper ventilation when working with any chemicals. If you are cleaning a concrete floor inside the garage, open all the doors to allow good air circulation.

When muriatic acid is used, use caution and wear appropriate safety clothing such as goggles, rubber gloves and rubber boots. Carefully follow all manufacturer directions and warnings.

To prevent the concrete from absorbing too much acid, pre-wet the stained area with water.

Never use a wire brush when cleaning a concrete surface as pieces of the brush may become lodged in the concrete and cause future rust problems.

Apply cleaners to large areas of oil stained concrete on cloudy days to prevent the area from drying too quickly.

Prevention of oil drippings on a concrete driveway is easier than cleaning the stain. If you have an automobile that tends to leak oil, consider laying down a piece of cardboard to absorb the oil before it has a chance to soak into your driveway.

About the Author

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