

Care and Maintenance of Drives and Car Parking Areas



What is Asphalt?

Asphalt is a generic term used for a mixture of aggregate and binder, normally bitumen. Terms such as tarmac, macadam, and stone mastic asphalt all fall under this generic heading.

All Asphalts are specified or designed for a particular purpose, whether it be for footpaths, household driveways, motorways or airfield runways. In all applications they must be able to withstand traffic loading without deformation or cracking. In order for this to happen, the asphalt must be flexible to some degree, and this flexibility derives from the use of bitumen as a binder.

Caring for Your Drive

By following the simple advice below, the appearance and expected lifespan of asphalt driveways and parking areas can be maintained.

- In spells of warm weather, or when the asphalt has been freshly laid, vehicles fitted with powered steering may have a detrimental effect resulting in small areas of scuffing or marking of the surface. The main cause of such defects is the steering of vehicles whilst the vehicle is stationary or manoeuvring in restricted areas. Therefore it is essential that such actions be kept to a minimum.

The surface may also be maintained by use of fine grit, or dousing with water in warm weather, in order to prevent the 'scrubbing' action of vehicle tyres.

If such defects do occur, the surface should be immediately trodden in to reconsolidate the loose aggregate particles that have been disturbed, although this may only be effective whilst the material is relatively new.

- Softening of asphalt can occur when it is contaminated with such substances as oil, petrol or diesel, as well as some detergents. The extent of the softening is dependent on such factors as the type of asphalt used, the quantity of contaminant and the length of time the contaminant is in contact with the asphalt.

If spillage of contaminants does occur, it is advisable to immediately soak up the liquid with absorbent paper, dry sand or sawdust, which should then be discarded in an appropriate manner.

Small spillages may be treated using a soft brush with a mild soap solution, which should break down the contaminant, although some slight staining may remain.

- Point loading of an asphalt surface by such mechanisms as ladders, and rigid caravan 'feet' may cause serious defects to the surface. In such instances the use of boards to spread the loading is advised.

- Where the asphalt surfacing has been laid in close proximity to lawns and flower beds, it is fairly common for small weeds to grow in the soil which may accumulate on the surface, or even from underneath. If the roots do not penetrate the surface, the weeds should be carefully removed and discarded. If the roots penetrate the surface, a proprietary water based weed killer should be applied. Once the weeds have dried, they should be carefully removed, and any unconsolidated trodden in whilst the surface is warm.

By following the advice provided, asphalt driveways and parking areas should retain their appearance and provide a suitable surface for many years.

It is always advisable to ensure that any asphalt surfacing or remedial work is carried out by a suitably qualified and recommended surfacing contractor.

For further information on this advice or any other queries, please contact the following address:

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