

Concrete: What was once considered a necessity due to its durability, quality, and endurance is now considered the perfect canvas for a flossy must-have. Driveways, patios, and walkways are no longer just entrances to our homes, they have become a style statement, the reflection of our personal aesthetic brilliance and that's why more and more of us are considering giving our homes this facelift.

The front of your home is the face of your home, and you want the first impression to be a lasting one. Cracked, old concrete driveways are signs of aging and could use a renovation that will increase the curb appeal of your home. With the unlimited possibilities available today, there's no reason to settle for drab, plain concrete. Driveways, patios, and walkways are now fashionably versatile and can turn the simplest house on the block into the neighborhood gem.

Having been a manufacturer of products for the repair and restoration of bridges and highways for over twenty years, in the last decade we have seen our products used as the hottest trend towards restoration rather than removing and replacing concrete. It is more economical, and depending on the products you choose, it is a green alternative. Products such as ours are available that are non-acidic, non-toxic, and contain zero VOC's. Installation does not require the use of special heavy equipment, energy resources, and fuel. By resurfacing concrete instead of removing and replacing it, you can enhance the appearance with thin toppings to create the look of marble, slate, stone, tile, brick, rock, or wood. Of course, the condition of the concrete must be treatable without any major cracks, lifting, or separation. A concrete coating will not fix these structural problems, but it will certainly add significant value to your property.

If you have existing concrete and intend to pour new concrete as well, a



Overlays stamped with Ashlar slate.

Concrete Overlays Leave Lasting Impressions

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A backyard patio deck.



To match the home, the driveway was stained blue.

beautiful way to make all of it look seamless would be to overlay the old and new at once. This will ensure color consistency. New concrete, however, should be left to cure for at least 28 days before coating it. Overlays, stains, and toppings can be applied to the existing concrete for a fresh, new look that will complement your home and enhance its architectural elements. The patterns, textures, and color options are endless. You determine the style that is right for you.

For example, a Spanish style home can be enhanced by using stamp patterns such as Spanish tile, Ashlar slate, Arizona flagstone, and European fan to match a tile roof with complementary colors. For colonial style homes consider a circular pattern that offsets the boxy home shape. For an upscale look, go with a stamp or texture in colors that complement the exterior façade. For a more subtle look, try a simple textured finish, such as a broom finish or knockdown texture, trimmed with a decorative border. These types of surfaces also create a non-slip surface. Sometimes when cracks are not treatable, they can be incorporated into a pattern such as flagstone to make the appearance of the crack less obvious, while hiding the blemish. No matter what type of home you have, from

simple staining to an exotic garden stone pattern, your concrete can transform from drab to stunning.

Tim Salter, an attorney in San Diego, California, recently had an overlay installed in his backyard and pool deck. Tim had been working on the remodeling of the interior of his home and was adding on to it when he realized he could increase his home's square footage by extending the new tile design into his backyard. Now, he and his family are able to utilize the once barren backyard as additional entertainment space. By beautifying this rarely used space, he's found that he spends more time outside than inside. He and his wife Gail are hosting more dinner events, swimming more, and keeping their doors open to admire their outside beauty. Tim was not able to resurface his driveway and the front of his home because of the homeowner's association regulations, but he didn't let that stop him from creating the perfect living environment for his family. Starting with the walkways around the side of his home and flowing into the backyard and pool deck, a roman slate texture was installed with colors that accent the tile he chose for the kitchen and living room interior, making it a perfect blend between the indoors and

decorative concrete

out. "My new backyard is much more warm and inviting, and is the perfect spot for entertaining. The rich colors and deep texture we chose enhance the design style selected for inside. We're also confident that our daughter will have more fun in the pool and that it's a much cooler, safer surface for her to be on. And, it was a fraction of the cost of getting authentic stone installed. It has definitely left a lasting impression with our visitors and they can't wait to come back again."

Pricing varies for each project, but you will find that surface textures are less expensive than conventional flooring, and you have more control over the pattern, texture, color, and overall appearance of the decorative overlay. The overlays can also be installed inside your home, in your kitchens, bathrooms, and even on your countertops. When it comes to flooring, most people typically purchase what they can afford, not what they really want. The versatility of decorative concrete overlays allows you to get what you want at an affordable price.

In addition to its style benefits, concrete overlays should be much stronger than simple concrete. The result is a beautiful, elegant high performance product on your existing surface. The installation process typically takes about seven days to complete. Leveling and sloping of concrete can also be done during this process with the right materials, but a typical overlay is as thin as 1/16 inch to 1/4 inch, depending on the pattern or texture selected.

Whatever masterpiece you decide to create for your home, it is important to remember that there is maintenance

involved. Maintenance includes protecting the surface with a durable sealer that is strong enough to resist wear from traffic. Driveways should be sealed with an industrial strength solvent-based sealer, while walkways can be sealed with a strong waterbased sealer. Around pool decks, make sure the sealer used will resist the pool chemicals, sun block, and tanning lotions. Choose a sealer that is UV resistant so that it will protect the color and not turn yellow over time. Re-sealing should be done every few years to enhance the luster of the color and to keep your surface protected from harmful elements and resistant to harsh chemicals. Using a mild cleaner when desired will keep your surface clean as needed.

In colder climates, rest assured that there are overlay systems that are resistant to freeze/thaw conditions. To reduce the risk of damage to your surface, overlays should not be scraped with shovels or plow machines.

If you are considering a concrete facelift, ask your contractor to provide physical samples of his work to make sure you are getting what you want. The most challenging part of this type of project can be making your design choice. Always make sure you sign off on the "idea" of what you want to make sure it is executed the way you imagine it to be. Also, look for an installer that has been trained to install the products you want correctly, ask for a warranty against delamination, and inquire about a portfolio and references before hiring. ●

Concrete barbeque is stained to match the overlaid pool deck floor.

