

What to do with Ugly Concrete!
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Syntec Concrete Coatings

In today's homes and landscaping concrete is arguably the most durable and cost effective building material especially for patios, pool decks and walkways. The options on how presenting the concrete in a coordinated landscape or color coordinated decor vary depending on the condition of the concrete and when the decision is made to do something more flattering to the eye.

New Concrete

If the homeowner is starting with bare ground several options immediately come to mind. An in-concrete color can be selected. This is commonly called colored concrete or where a liquid color is 'mixed' in with the fresh concrete before it is poured. This technique yields a solid colored surface that can be color coordinated with the home, building or landscaping.

Additionally, with new concrete, stamping can be employed along with the colored concrete to apply texture and pattern to the exposed surface simulating stone, brick or even wood.

Concrete Polishing

This surface preparation can yield excellent results. Basically a combination of grinding and polishing the existing or new concrete exposes the imbedded aggregate stone and polishes it to high luster. The surface is then sealed to reduce future staining or discoloration. This process although time consuming and costing accordingly yields an excellent finished and decorative surface.

Existing Concrete

There are many options available when the decision has been made to do something to beautify the concrete slab, walkway or deck.

Staining



Acid Stain



Acrylic Stain

Concrete staining is another option that has gained in popularity. This system is straightforward but can be unpredictable as you are at the mercy of the concrete. Basically, stain is a liquid color mixed with a form of acid, usually muratic or hydrochloric, which is sprayed, brushed, poured or wiped on the concrete surface and left for a period of time for the acid to react with the mineral content of the concrete hence the unpredictability. This system gives a motley or old world look. Acid staining must be neutralized with ammonia or alkaline-based product before the surface can be allowed to dry and then sealed. A recent addition to the staining repertoire is water based acrylic stain. This system has many benefits: predictability, environmentally friendly and does not require neutralization. The colors, however, are not as vibrant as acid staining.

Painting

Many paint products are on the market to 'change the color of concrete'. This basically all that is happening. An acrylic, enamel or epoxy paint is rolled, brushed or squeegeed onto the surface and allowed to dry. A sealer can be applied, if desired.

Acrylic paints

Acrylic paints are used to color pool decks and can be applied over bare concrete to provide a reasonable color change to the floor. While not as durable as other finishes they are reasonably priced and do well in the residential environment but repainting is required periodically to keep the same luster and an acceptable finish.

Epoxy Systems



Vinyl Chip



Vinyl Chip with Custom Color

Epoxy paints have used for years both commercially and in the residential setting. Today's epoxies are very durable and can be applied in a variety of colors, tones and textures. Various techniques are used to give the floor system a stunning look! Many additives can be used depending on the surface to be coated and the effect desired including, vinyl chip and sand broadcasts, metal flake and dispersing agents for that iridescence. Epoxy systems are very durable and have traditionally been used in garages, warehouses, showrooms and office

complexes. Systems are available that are county approved for animal and human environments where a system is required for sterile environments. Many homeowners are opting for epoxies to give their homes that luxurious look over bare concrete.

Stamping

Additionally, with new concrete, stamping can be employed along with the colored concrete to apply texture and pattern to the exposed surface simulation stone, brick or even wood. Stamping can also be applied using an overlay system where the overlay is applied and before it hardens and flexible molds are pressed into the overlay to give the desired results.

Concrete Overlays



Simulated Slate



Simulated Tile



Simulated Flagstone

Acrylic overlays have been around for decades but have recently become very popular. The overlay system comprises Portland cement and an acrylic concentrate. The overlay is applied in a variety of methods to yield stunning results in simulation flagstone, tile, slate, pool decking and solid surface in an array of colors, tones and textures. This system is suitable for interior or exterior applications and can even be used as a decorative driveway coating.

What about concrete cracks and expansion joints

There is one hard and fast rule with concrete it cracks. Many places in the valley are more prone to this than others. 100 square feet is the optimal size without putting in an expansion joint to minimize the stress on the concrete. The state of Arizona has regulations in place for contractors to follow when pouring concrete and contractors must follow these guidelines. Most concrete cracks are evident in the patios, driveways of our homes. Cracks must be repaired before any coating; stain or paint is applied to the surface. There are many products on the market to help with this problem. Most are epoxy based and will effectively patch any crack. There is seldom a guarantee offered with concrete crack repairing as cracks tend to come back but are easily dealt with using the epoxy crack menders. Cracks appear for a reason and these can be varied and sometimes complex. Normally,

cracks appear because the slab was installed improperly, an improper concrete mix, slab heave or junior drove his dump truck across the patio.

The options for beautifying this most versatile flooring surface are many and cost varies with the options. Cost can vary from \$2.00 – more than \$15.00 per square foot depending on the condition of the concrete and the surface desired but there is always an option that fits everyone's budget so look into it and make your ugly concrete stunning!!