

## Cement Finish Care & Maintenance

### Technical Bulletin

#### TB007

**Category: Stucco**

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Stucco is one of the most durable finishes you will find on buildings. It is made from all-natural mineral materials; painting will never be necessary if cared for properly. Over time, stucco benefits from an occasional cleaning to remove airborne dust or other atmospheric matter. Occasionally, a lawn mower or garden tool might chip a corner, or some other minor repair might be needed. The following information will help you to take care of your stucco finish. Like any building material, stucco needs occasional care to keep its appearance fresh and clean. Here are a few simple things you can do to keep it looking its best.

#### What You Should do...

Be sure to keep irrigation systems directed away from your stucco wall. Over time, water from sprinkler systems could stain your finish and might cause mildew (a fungus), or efflorescence (a whitish powdery "bloom") to form. Wash your exterior finish a few times a year to keep its surface clean and its color bright. Here's how:

1. **Pre-wet:** Use a garden hose with an adjustable nozzle to pre-wet the wall over its entire surface. Pre-wetting, will overcome absorption, preventing the finish from absorbing dirty wash water. Set your hose nozzle on a medium to coarse spray. Start at the bottom and wet the surface all the way to the top.
2. **Wash:** When the surface has been pre-wet, adjust the hose nozzle to a "pressure stream" and direct the stream of water against the wall to loosen dirt and dust. This time, start at the top and work down to the bottom. "Caked-on" dirt when present might require loosening with a brush. To avoid eroding or damaging finishes, do **NOT** hold the nozzle too close to the surface.
3. **Use Cleanser if Necessary:** Sometimes a mild cleanser might be needed to remove stains. We recommend a mild solution of trisodium phosphate, also known as "TSP" available from most hardware stores. If you use a different product, be sure it is watersoluble (dissolves completely in water) and is safe for Portland cement, lime and oxide pigment colors. Do **NOT** use soap or dish washing liquid. Always test your cleaning solution on a small, inconspicuous area first to be sure it is safe for your wall.

4. **Rinse:** Flush the wall thoroughly with clean water to remove loosened dirt and cleansers.

**If you find mildew:** Wash the affected area with a mild solution of household bleach such as Clorox<sup>™</sup>. Always observe proper safety precautions when using any chemical or cleanser. Never allow children access to household chemicals or cleansers.

**If you find efflorescence:** Spray the affected area with White vinegar. This should neutralize the alkaline efflorescence. After a few minutes—and before the vinegar dries—thoroughly rinse the area with clean water. Efflorescence is usually caused by a combination of cool weather and excessive moisture.

#### **What You Should Not Do...**

Never use harsh detergents or cleansers that can damage portland cement, lime or oxide pigment colors.

Never hold the hose nozzle too close to the stucco surface. A forceful, high-pressure jet of water held too close could damage stucco finishes. When using a pressure washer, set it at < 1000 psi and try to stand roughly 10ft from the finish coat.



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