

Cleaning of Brickwork – Lime Bloom

Introduction

In general, lime mortar requires little or no maintenance. However there may be times when some surface cleansing may be required to remove lime bloom.

Lime bloom is a natural phenomenon that occurs due to intolerance to certain conditions during the early stages of hydration, leaving a thin film of grey/off-white deposit on the mortar joints. First impressions are that the mortar is discoloured but this isn't the case. Lime bloom can be easily identified by dampening the surface and you will see an immediate change in colour back to normal with no variation confirming there is no fault in the product itself or indeed the workmanship.

Given time this will weather away naturally once exposed to the elements however, to accelerate the process there are a number of options available and it is advisable to prepare a trial area to determine most effect solution.

The following options are in order of aggressiveness, always start with the weaker option first. Under no circumstances should a power wash be used.

1. Cleanse with water

In certain circumstances, cleaning with clean water and brushing the surface vigorously may be sufficient to remove the deposits. Do not use wire brush as this is too aggressive.

2. Cleanse with White Vinegar & Water

White vinegar, being slightly acidic mixed with water 20:1 ratio will dissolve build-up of lime bloom deposits on brickwork.

- i. When mixed, brush the solution onto the surface using a stiff scrubbing brush.
- ii. Allow to soak for 10-15 minutes
- iii. Rinse with clean water
- iv. Repeat as necessary.

Registered Address: Unit 2 Paddock Road Industrial Estate, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 5BY
Tel: 01189 469 153 (head office) +44 (0)845 873 3888 (orders) 01189 946 9176 (fax). Company Reg no: 6561874.

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3. Muriatic Acid (brick cleaner)

Muriatic acid is a much stronger chemical composition and should only be considered if the build-up of mortar deposits are particularly heavy.

- i. Mix 1 part muriatic acid with 12 parts water, add the acid to the water to avoid splatter, and mix thoroughly.
- ii. Soak the brickwork with clean water
- iii. Apply to surface and gently scrub
- iv. Leave for 10-15 minutes
- v. Rinse with clean water
- vi. Repeat as necessary

4. Hydrochloric Acid Masonry Cleaner

Trial a small area to determine optimum effective dilution between 5 -15%.

- i. Dampen the area to be treated with clean water
- ii. Apply the acid cleaner with a stippled brush (trimmed paint brush) or small scrubbing brush
- iii. Leave on surface for 10-15minutes to dissolve lime bloom deposits
- iv. Final rinse with cleaner water
- v. Allow to dry
- vi. Repeat treatment if necessary

Note: for removal of efflorescence or mortar deposits on brickwork use this option 4 but at a stronger dilution of 10 – 20% but follow same procedure.

Health & Safety

When using hazardous materials, please make sure you have the correct ppe and you follow guidelines on data sheet.

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Info@ecoright.co.uk



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