

THE FAMILY **Handyman** #1 in DIY Home Improvement

HOME CARE + repair

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Fix a driveway apron

It's normal for asphalt driveways to sink a bit over time. But when your driveway has sunk to the point where it's 4 or 5 in. lower than your garage floor, it's time to fix it. If you don't, water will pool in the depression, seep into the soil below, and eventually destroy the driveway.

Asphalt companies charge about \$1,000 to dig out the old portion and install a new apron. Concrete contractors charge even more. But you can rebuild your asphalt driveway apron yourself. The entire job takes a full day and it's not much fun. But the materials and tools only cost about \$250, so the savings is worth it.

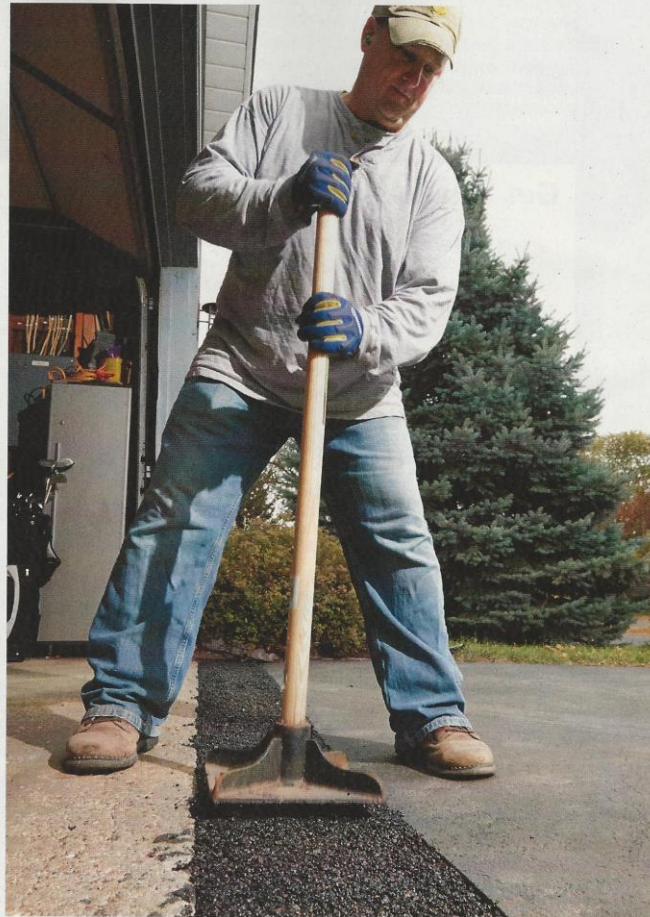
You'll need a diamond blade for your circular saw, a tamper, a pry bar and a short square-blade shovel. Plus, you'll need enough cold patch material to fill in the trench you make (one choice is Quikrete Asphalt Cold Patch, No. 170158, \$10 a bag). To figure out how many bags you'll need, refer to the depth and width tables on the bag. Finally, you'll need mineral spirits and rags for cleanup. Here's how to make the repair.

First check the weather

Cold patch cures by solvent evaporation, and it takes about 30 days to reach a full cure. So the best time to do the project is during an extended warm, dry spell. You can do it in spring or fall, but cold weather and rain will greatly extend the cure time.

Wear old clothes and protect your carpet

This is a messy job, and no matter how careful you are, you're going to get tar on



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your clothes and shoes. You can't wash off the tar with soap and water. So wear old clothes and shoes that you can toss into the trash when you're done. If you have to go into the house during the project, leave your shoes outside so you don't track tar into the house.

Cut out the sunken area

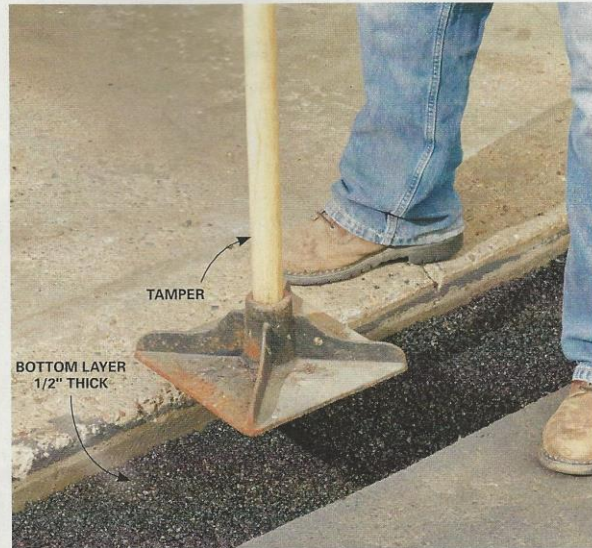
Cold patch works only when it's compacted and "keyed" into at least two

vertical surfaces. So don't think you can build up the driveway height by pouring cold patch on top of the old sunken asphalt—the patching material will just break off in chunks. Instead, you'll have to cut out the sunken asphalt (Photo 1). After it's cut, lay a block of wood on the soil at the edge of the driveway, shove a pry bar under the old asphalt, and pry against the wood block. The old asphalt will lift up and break off in sections.



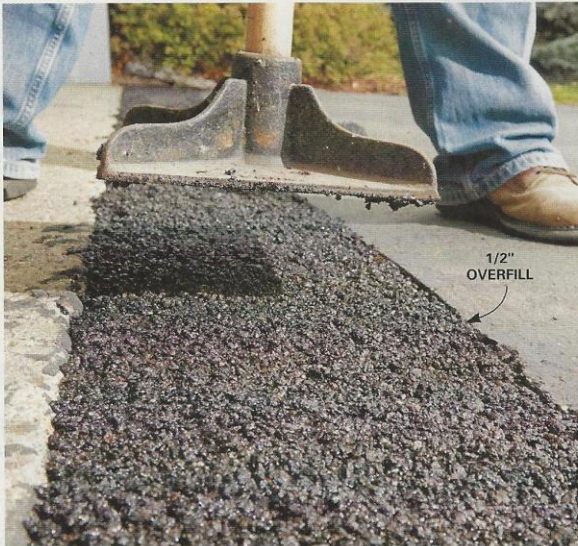
1 CUT OUT THE SUNKEN ASPHALT

Slap a diamond blade into your circular saw and set it to its maximum cutting depth. Then snap a chalk line out from the garage floor to a maximum distance of 24 in. Wear an N95 respirator and safety glasses and cut out the old asphalt.



2 PUT IN THE BOTTOM LAYER

Pour in a small amount of cold patch material and level it with a square-blade shovel. Tamp down a test section and measure the depth. The bottom layer should only be 1/2 in. thick when compacted. Add or remove cold patch material and then tamp down the entire starter row.



3 BUILD ADDITIONAL LAYERS

Add and compact the cold patch in 1-in. layers until you reach the garage floor. Then overfill with an additional 1/2 in. of material and tamp to get a smooth surface.



4 DRIVE OVER IT TO COMPACT

Cut a piece of plywood slightly wider than the trench. Lay it over the patch material and cover it with 2x4s. Then drive over it several times with your vehicle until the patch is level with the garage floor.

Remove all the cut asphalt and scrape off any caulking material sticking to the edge of the garage floor.

Next, build a starter row of patch material (Photo 2). Once the starter row is in place and tamped, apply additional patch material in 1-in. layers (Photo 3). Resist the temptation to completely fill the area and compact it in one fell swoop. You simply can't exert enough compaction force with a tamper to properly key it into the vertical surfaces—the patch material will just creep out the sides when you drive on it.

Once your tamped layers are level with the garage floor, add a final topping layer. Then lay down wood scraps and use your vehicle to do a final compaction (Photo 4). Clean all your tools with mineral spirits and dispose of the rags properly to prevent spontaneous combustion.

The instructions say you can drive over the patch immediately. But tires may still make slight depressions in the asphalt until it's fully cured, which takes 30 days. So leave the plywood in place for a few weeks at least.