Asphalt vs. Concrete Driveways

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OPTION FOR YOUR HOME

BOWES CONSTRUCTION, INC.

WHAT IS CONCRETE?

Concrete is a material made from cement, water, sand, and gravel. It sometimes contains additives, creating a solid, customizable surface that lasts long but is prone to cracking in freezing conditions, requiring precise installation.

WHAT IS ASPHALT?

Asphalt is a durable, black paving material used for driveways and roads, primarily composed of bitumen (a petroleum-based binder) mixed with aggregates like sand, gravel, or crushed stone. Its flexibility makes it ideal for varying climates but requires regular maintenance.

CONCRETE PROS

- Low maintenance
- Performs well in hot climates
- Customizable
- Lifespan: 30 years in freezing climates

ASPHALT PROS

- Flexible; ideal for cold climates
- Quick installation
- Lower initial costs
- Easier/cheaper repairs
- Made with recycled materials
- Lifespan: 30-40 years with routine maintenance

Asphalt driveways typically have a smooth, dark black surface that provides a sleek, uniform look but offers limited aesthetic variety, often fading to gray over time. Concrete driveways, in contrast, can be customized with stamping, staining, or texturing to mimic stone, brick, or other patterns, offering a more visually appealing and versatile appearance. While asphalt's simplicity suits minimalist designs, concrete's adaptability allows for greater curb appeal, though it may show stains or cracks more noticeably in harsh climates. Both materials can enhance a home's exterior.

Maintenance Cycles

ASPHALT

- **0-5 Years:** Clean debris 1-2x/year. Apply sealcoat every 3-5 years. Fill minor cracks promptly.
- **5-10 Years:** Continue seal coating every 3-5 years. Crack seal after 5-7 years. Ensure proper drainage to prevent water damage.
- **10-15 Years:** Seal coat if surface wears thin. Crack seal on major cracks.
- **15-30 Years:** Mill and overlay if curb & gutter is prevalent. Overlay if curb & gutter isn't prevalent. With excellent care, some last over 30 years.

CONCRETE

- **0-5 Years:** Allow full cure (avoid sealers first year). Clean 1-2x/year. Apply sealer every 3-5 years if desired. Fix hairline cracks with PCC filler.
- **5-10 Years:** Continue cleaning and optional sealing. Address joint issues or minor settling. Degrease oil spots.
- **10-15 Years:** Inspect expansion joints; reseal as needed. Patch larger cracks with PCC filler, which can be costly.
- **15-30 Years:** Removal and replacement may be needed if severe cracking occurs after 30 years, though many last up to 30-40 years with basic maintenance.

Concrete requires less frequent upkeep but is less forgiving in cold climates, where cracks can worsen without prompt repair. Regular cleaning prevents stains.

Asphalt thrives with regular care to protect against UV damage and weathering. Sealcoating every 3-5 years is critical for longevity.