

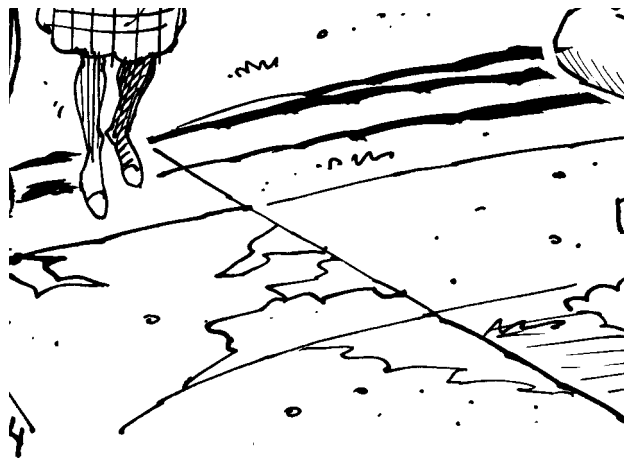
Bright Ideas

Fill Those Cracks!

(Filling Cracks in Driveways, Sidewalks, and Patios)

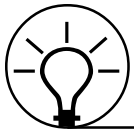
After a home or apartment has been built, and a few years have gone by, cracks start appearing in driveways and sidewalks. These don't look so good, but usually fixing them is something a homeowner puts off . . . and off . . . and off. If you were to go through several neighborhoods, offering to patch these cracks, chances are good that there would be no shortage of jobs. You would need to pull out all the

weeds and green things that grow in the cracks. You'd need to measure the length of each crack, in number of feet (or meters, if you've gone metric). You'd use tubes of latex driveway caulk and a hand caulking gun for the smaller cracks, and buckets of patching compound for the larger holes. You'd sign a simple letter of agreement with each homeowner, stating how many feet of cracks you'd found, where the cracks were, and how much you'd charge per foot to fill them.



This job could be broken down into two. That is, some homeowners would only want the weeds and grass removed from their driveway cracks, and something put in the cracks that would prevent regrowth. Others would want you to fill the cracks after the weeds were out. Your prices for services would reflect that split in the work.

EQUIPMENT: Caulking gun, tubes of patch material, sacks or buckets of the same material (buy from local hardware or do-it-yourself store; you may be able to work a special discount deal with the manager if you buy steadily from a few sources). A spatula, trowel or other tool to smooth the patch material. You will need a weed and vegetation killer too, probably in a spray can.



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TRANSPORTATION: This could be done on foot, hauling the materials in a wagon or handcart, or carried on a bicycle. A bicycle trailer would help here (build one from scrap material).

FIRST STEPS: **(1)** Go around your neighborhood or a nearby neighborhood, and see how many concrete or asphalt driveways have cracks, especially where there are weeds growing in them. **(2)** Do your own driveway at home, or that of a friend. If you can find a really bad one, and turn it into a really good-looking job, you can take pictures before you start and after you finish. Maybe you can work for free on this one, or for the cost of materials alone. **(3)** Get orders from neighbors and friends. **(4)** Get enough money from each person to cover the cost of materials as a “down payment”.

MARKETING: You will probably go door-to-door, perhaps putting simple notices on doorknobs of houses. You might want to approach the resident manager of a nearby apartment complex. You could put up copies of your before-after pictures and your advertisement on supermarket bulletin boards.

ADVANTAGES: The materials are available and easily used. You only have to buy what you will need, according to the contracts you’ve won. Everybody who owns a home likely has a driveway, sidewalk, or some other asphalt or concrete surface. Cracking in summer or winter is common. You don’t need a long-term effort here. The work is seasonal, from mid-spring to mid-fall.

RISKS: Few. You will have to read (or have some help reading) the directions on the materials exactly, and be prepared to come back and do more work on a job, if your repairs also crack. You’ll probably have to practice on one driveway first, to get the “feel” of working with the tools and materials. You may find yourself with excess materials, if a homeowner backs out of an agreement before you start work. You have to have some money to buy materials to start. You must be very careful if you use a chemical weed killer.