

Pouring Color Concrete for Decorative Projects

The most important consideration when adding color to your concrete is consistency. Decorative concrete is used for aesthetics and requires more skill to place than regular concrete. It is essential that the contractor uses the same material and process throughout the pour to achieve an even appearance.

Mix

The strength of the mix needed is determined by the project type and intended use. Different strengths do not affect color, but using a standard mix with fly ash will. Fly ash is a by-product of coal burning plants. This by-product will always have slight variations of color and residue. The variation doesn't impact the strength because it's a filler, but it can have a huge impact on the outcome of color. If you are using color, it is highly recommended that you choose a cement only mix. The cost is slightly higher, but when looks are important, this is not where you should cut costs. It will cost substantially more to rip out and re-do the concrete if the fly ash causes an uneven appearance.

Consistency

Consistency is crucial when using color. Color concrete needs to come from the same plant for the entire pour. Cement and Aggregates can differ even in close locations and even slight variations can impact color.

Things to keep in Mind:

- Color concrete, just like painting your home, should be completed on the same day. Environmental changes like heat and humidity that differ daily can cause your color to be uneven.
- Water should never be added to the jobsite. Even a few gallons will dilute the color. Extra water also includes the water on brooms and hand tools used when finishing or added to the surface for curing.
- If pouring in cold weather, never use a chloride accelerator as this will also cause uneven color.
- Metal finishing tools are not recommended. Wood or plastic will give a much better result.

Testing

Testing the first load of color concrete is essential. If there are any issues with slump or air-entrainment, they need to be address and corrected before the concrete is poured so the next load can be adjusted to maintain consistency. Consistency is vital in achieving a great looking decorative concrete project

