

OTTAWA DRIVEWAYS

DIY Tips & Maintenance

Homeowner-friendly driveway upkeep including crack filling, sealer application, weed control, and seasonal maintenance schedules for Ottawa properties

23 Expert Answers from Driveway IQ

ottawadriveways.com/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. Can I apply a second coat of sealer to my Ottawa driveway myself if the first coat is wearing thin?
2. How do I fix a single sunken interlock paver in my Ottawa driveway without calling a contractor?
3. Where should I mount a security camera to cover my driveway in Ottawa without it getting damaged by ice?
4. How much should I budget for annual driveway maintenance in Ottawa including sealing, crack repair, and snow prep?
5. Can I use vinegar or household products to kill weeds growing in my Ottawa driveway cracks?
6. How often should I sweep and inspect my Ottawa driveway to catch small problems early?
7. What material should I use to fill the expansion gap between my driveway and foundation wall in Ottawa?
8. How do I keep my interlock driveway in Ottawa looking clean without using a pressure washer?
9. Will an RV or heavy trailer parked on my asphalt driveway in Ottawa cause permanent damage over time?
10. What spring cleaning routine should I follow for my Ottawa asphalt driveway after snow melts?
11. What is the best way to maintain a gravel driveway in rural Ottawa without professional regrading?
12. What should I be checking on my driveway each spring and fall to catch problems early before they get expensive?
13. Can I sealcoat my asphalt driveway myself in Ottawa or should I hire someone to do it?
14. What's the best way to get rid of weeds growing between my interlock driveway pavers in Kanata?
15. How much does it cost to rent a pressure washer and clean my driveway myself in Ottawa?
16. I've got a few small cracks in my asphalt driveway — can I fill them myself before winter hits?
17. What's a good annual maintenance schedule for my driveway in Ottawa with our crazy winters?
18. How do I remove an oil stain from my concrete driveway without wrecking the surface?
19. How often should I re-sand the joints on my interlock driveway and what kind of sand do I use?
20. What's the best way to clean up the edges of my driveway where the grass keeps creeping in?
21. What should be on my fall prep checklist to get my driveway through an Ottawa winter without major damage?
22. How do I know when a driveway problem is too big for DIY and I actually need to call a professional?

23. How much would it cost me to do basic driveway maintenance myself for a year versus paying someone in Ottawa?

Can I apply a second coat of sealer to my Ottawa driveway myself if the first coat is wearing thin?

Yes, you can apply a second coat of sealer to your Ottawa driveway yourself, but timing and surface preparation are critical for success. If the first coat is wearing thin but still adhering well, a second application can restore protection and extend your driveway's life.

Surface preparation is essential before applying any second coat. Start by thoroughly cleaning the driveway with a stiff brush or pressure washer to remove all dirt, oil stains, and loose debris. Any areas where the old sealer is peeling or flaking must be scraped off completely — new sealer won't bond to loose material and will fail within months. Fill any cracks wider than 5mm with rubberized crack filler and let cure for 24 hours before sealing. This step is particularly important in Ottawa because our 50+ freeze-thaw cycles per winter will widen any unsealed cracks rapidly.

Check the compatibility of your new sealer with the existing coating. Asphalt emulsion sealers and coal tar sealers are not always compatible — mixing types can cause poor adhesion, bubbling, or premature peeling. If you're unsure what was previously applied, test the new sealer on a small, inconspicuous area first. Most residential Ottawa driveways use asphalt emulsion sealer, which can typically be recoated with the same product type.

Weather conditions must be perfect for sealer application in Ottawa's climate. Apply only when temperatures are above 15°C and rising, with no rain forecast for 48 hours. Avoid applying in direct hot sunlight (above 30°C) as the sealer will dry too quickly and may not penetrate properly. Early morning or late afternoon on a warm, dry day is ideal. Ottawa's unpredictable weather means watching the forecast carefully — a surprise thunderstorm can ruin a fresh sealer application.

Application technique affects longevity significantly. Use a squeegee or long-handled brush rather than a roller for better penetration and more even coverage. Apply two thin coats rather than one thick coat — the first coat should be almost dry before applying the second. Work in manageable sections and maintain a wet edge to avoid lap marks. Don't walk or drive on the sealed surface for at least 24 hours, longer if temperatures are cool or humidity is high.

When to hire a professional instead: If more than 30% of the existing sealer is peeling or if you notice widespread cracking, alligator cracking, or surface raveling, the driveway may need crack filling with hot-pour material or even resurfacing rather than just resealing. Professional contractors have hot-pour crack filling equipment that creates permanent repairs, while DIY cold-pour crack fillers are temporary solutions that typically fail within one Ottawa winter.

Need help finding a driveway contractor for more extensive repairs? Ottawa Driveways can match you with local paving professionals for a free assessment of your driveway's condition.

Q2

How do I fix a single sunken interlock paver in my Ottawa driveway without calling a contractor?

A single sunken interlock paver is typically caused by localized base settling and can be fixed by a capable homeowner with basic tools. You'll need to lift the paver, add bedding sand underneath, compact it properly, and relay the paver level with its neighbours.

Tools and materials you'll need: Two flat pry bars or large screwdrivers, coarse bedding sand (concrete sand works well), a hand tamper or rubber mallet, a level, and a broom. The repair should take 30 to 60 minutes depending on how settled the paver is.

Step-by-step repair process: First, carefully lift the sunken paver using flat pry bars inserted along opposite edges — work slowly to avoid chipping the paver or disturbing adjacent ones. Once removed, you'll likely see a depression in the bedding sand beneath. Add coarse bedding sand to fill the low spot, then compact it firmly with a hand tamper or the handle of your rubber mallet. The goal is to create a firm, level base that sits about 10mm higher than the final desired height to account for settling when you replace the paver.

Test-fit and adjust: Place the paver back in position and check that it sits level with surrounding pavers using a small level or straight board. The paver should be flush with its neighbours — not high or low. If it's still too low, remove it again and add more sand. If it's too high, remove some sand and re-compact. This trial-and-error process is normal and ensures a proper repair.

Ottawa-specific considerations: Single paver settling often occurs after Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles, particularly in spring when the ground is saturated from snowmelt. If you notice multiple pavers settling in the same area, or if this same paver keeps sinking after repair, you likely have a larger base stability issue that requires professional attention. Ottawa's clay soils can create localized soft spots that cause recurring settlement.

When to call a professional: If you find three or more pavers settled in the same general area, if the base material beneath appears to be missing or washed away, or if you discover that the paver has cracked during settling, you're dealing with a more significant base failure that requires proper excavation and re-compaction. Also, if the sunken area is near your driveway's edge where snowplow damage is common, a contractor should assess whether edge restraints need reinforcement.

This is one of the more straightforward interlock repairs that most Ottawa homeowners can handle successfully, and it's good practice for understanding how your driveway is constructed.

Q3

Where should I mount a security camera to cover my driveway in Ottawa without it getting damaged by ice?

Mount your security camera under a protective eave or soffit overhang, positioned 8-10 feet high and angled downward to cover the driveway approach while staying protected from Ottawa's brutal ice storms and freeze-thaw cycles.

The key to driveway security camera placement in Ottawa is protecting the equipment from our extreme weather while maintaining clear sight lines. **Under eave mounting** is your best option — position the camera under your home's roof overhang where it's shielded from direct precipitation, ice buildup, and the freeze-thaw cycles that destroy exposed electronics. The eave provides natural protection from Ottawa's heavy snow loads and the ice dams that form along rooflines during our frequent temperature swings.

Avoid mounting directly on posts or fences where cameras are fully exposed to the elements. Ottawa receives over 200 centimeters of snowfall annually, and our 50+ freeze-thaw cycles per winter create ice buildup that can snap mounting brackets, fog lenses, and damage camera housings. Ice storms like the devastating 1998 event coat everything in thick ice shells that expand and contract as temperatures fluctuate between -25°C and above freezing.

For **optimal coverage and protection**, mount the camera 8-10 feet high under the eave closest to your driveway entrance, angled to capture vehicles entering and exiting. This height keeps it above snow plow spray and road salt while the eave overhang shields it from direct ice formation. Choose a camera rated for extreme cold operation (at least -30°C) with a built-in heater if your budget allows. **Weatherproof housing** rated IP66 or higher is essential — Ottawa's driving rain, snow, and salt spray will penetrate anything less robust.

Consider **power and connectivity** during installation. Running power and ethernet cables through exterior walls requires proper sealing to prevent air leaks and moisture intrusion. If using wireless cameras, ensure strong Wi-Fi signal strength to the mounting location, as Ottawa's older homes often have thick stone or brick walls that interfere with wireless signals.

This falls outside driveway and paving work — for security system installation, electrical work, and other home improvement projects, you'll find qualified contractors through the Ottawa Construction Network at justynrookcontracting.com. They can help you find licensed electricians and security specialists familiar with

Ottawa's challenging climate conditions.

How much should I budget for annual driveway maintenance in Ottawa including sealing, crack repair, and snow prep?

Annual driveway maintenance in Ottawa typically costs \$200 to \$800 per year depending on your driveway material, size, and age. For asphalt driveways, plan \$300 to \$600 annually; for interlock, \$400 to \$800; and for concrete, \$150 to \$400.

Asphalt driveway maintenance is the most intensive in Ottawa's climate. Sealcoating every 2 to 3 years costs \$200 to \$500 for an average driveway — this single investment extends your driveway's lifespan by 5 to 10 years and prevents costly crack repairs. Crack filling should be done annually on driveways over 5 years old, costing \$100 to \$300 depending on the extent of cracking. Hot-pour crack filler applied by professionals (\$2 to \$5 per linear foot) lasts much longer than DIY cold-pour products that fail within one Ottawa winter.

Interlock driveways require different maintenance but similar annual costs. Polymeric sand replacement every 3 to 5 years costs \$300 to \$800, which averages \$100 to \$200 annually. Individual paver releveling and replacement runs \$200 to \$600 per year for typical settling and snow plow damage. Weed control and ant prevention in joints adds another \$50 to \$150 annually if you hire professionals.

Concrete driveways have the lowest routine maintenance costs but require attention to prevent expensive spalling. Annual cleaning and minor crack sealing costs \$100 to \$250. Concrete sealing every 3 to 5 years (\$400 to \$800) averages \$100 to \$200 annually and is essential for preventing salt damage and freeze-thaw spalling.

Ottawa's extreme climate drives these maintenance needs. Over 50 freeze-thaw cycles per winter expand water in every crack and joint, while 200+ centimetres of snowfall means months of plowing, shovelling, and salt exposure. The temperature differential of 60+ degrees between summer and winter causes constant expansion and contraction that stresses all driveway materials far more aggressively than milder climates.

Snow preparation adds \$100 to \$300 annually to your budget. Quality ice melt (calcium chloride instead of rock salt) costs \$50 to \$100 per winter and reduces concrete scaling damage. Professional snow removal services range from \$300 to \$800 per season for driveway clearing, though many Ottawa homeowners handle this themselves. Replacing snow shovel blades and maintaining snow blowers adds another \$50 to \$100 annually.

Budget an additional 20 to 30 percent for unexpected repairs. Severe winters, heavy spring flooding, or snow plow damage can require emergency crack filling, pothole patching, or paver replacement that exceeds routine maintenance costs.

The best maintenance investment for any Ottawa driveway is addressing small problems immediately. A \$50 crack repair prevents a \$500 pothole; \$400 in sealcoating prevents \$4,000 in premature replacement. Ottawa's

climate is unforgiving — deferred maintenance compounds rapidly into major structural problems.

Need help finding a driveway contractor for maintenance or repairs? Ottawa Driveways can match you with local professionals who understand Ottawa's specific climate challenges and maintenance requirements.

Q5

Can I use vinegar or household products to kill weeds growing in my Ottawa driveway cracks?

Yes, white vinegar can kill weeds in driveway cracks, but it's only a temporary surface solution that won't prevent regrowth, and there are more effective approaches for Ottawa driveways.

Household vinegar (5% acetic acid) will burn the green tops of weeds within 24-48 hours, but it doesn't kill the root system. The weeds typically regrow within 2-4 weeks. For better results, use **horticultural vinegar (20% acetic acid)**, which penetrates deeper and provides longer-lasting control. Apply on sunny days when temperatures are above 15°C for maximum effectiveness. Avoid spraying on windy days to prevent drift onto desirable plants.

Other household options include boiling water poured directly on weeds (kills on contact but requires multiple treatments), corn gluten meal as a pre-emergent (prevents seeds from germinating but doesn't kill existing weeds), and hand-pulling when soil is moist after rain. Salt water will kill weeds but can damage surrounding vegetation and isn't recommended near plant beds.

The real solution for Ottawa driveways is addressing why weeds are growing in the first place. Weeds in driveway cracks indicate that the surface material has deteriorated enough to allow soil accumulation and seed germination. For **asphalt driveways**, this means the sealcoat has worn away and cracks have widened. The permanent fix is filling cracks with hot-pour rubberized crack filler, then applying fresh sealcoat every 2-3 years. For **interlock driveways**, weeds grow when polymeric sand has washed out of joints. The solution is removing old sand, cleaning joints, and reapplying fresh polymeric sand, which hardens and prevents weed growth for 3-5 years.

Practical maintenance approach: Kill existing weeds with vinegar or hand-pulling, then address the underlying surface issue. For asphalt, plan crack filling and sealcoating in late spring or early fall. For interlock, schedule polymeric sand replacement. This prevents the weed problem from recurring and protects your driveway investment.

When to hire a professional: If you have extensive cracking, widespread weed growth, or haven't maintained your driveway in several years, the surface may need more comprehensive repair than DIY weed control can address.

Need help finding a driveway contractor for crack repair or maintenance? Ottawa Driveways can match you with local paving professionals for a free estimate.

Q6

How often should I sweep and inspect my Ottawa driveway to catch small problems early?

You should sweep your Ottawa driveway monthly during the active season (April through November) and inspect it thoroughly twice per year — once in early spring after snowmelt and again in late fall before winter. This schedule catches small problems like cracks, settling, and drainage issues before they become expensive repairs.

Monthly sweeping removes debris that can stain surfaces, clog drainage, and hide developing problems. Sweep away leaves, dirt, oil drips, and organic matter that can promote mold growth on concrete or trap moisture against asphalt. Pay special attention to the edges where debris accumulates and can cause water pooling. Use a stiff-bristled push broom rather than a leaf blower, which can blow debris into joints between interlock pavers.

Spring inspection (April-May) is critical after Ottawa's brutal winter. Look for new cracks in asphalt wider than 5mm that need crack filling before they allow water penetration. Check for interlock pavers that have shifted, settled, or heaved from freeze-thaw cycling — these need releveling before they create tripping hazards or allow water infiltration. Examine concrete for new spalling (surface scaling) from road salt exposure. Test drainage by running a garden hose on the driveway during your first warm day — water should flow toward the street or drainage areas, not pool anywhere on the surface.

Fall inspection (October-November) prepares your driveway for winter. This is when you schedule crack filling, sealcoating (if due), or interlock maintenance before freezing temperatures arrive. Check that all drainage areas are clear of leaves and debris that could cause ice dams. Look for any settling or edge damage that could catch snowplow blades. If your driveway shows significant cracking, spalling, or settling, fall is the time to get contractor quotes for spring repairs — waiting until spring means competing with everyone else for contractor availability.

Ottawa's climate makes early detection crucial because small problems become major failures quickly. A hairline crack in asphalt that goes unnoticed can become a pothole after one winter of freeze-thaw cycling. A slightly settled interlock paver becomes a major trip hazard when frost heaving pushes adjacent pavers upward. Water pooling from a small drainage issue becomes a sheet of ice that damages the surface and creates safety hazards.

Between formal inspections, do a quick visual check whenever you're walking to your car. Look for oil stains (clean immediately with degreaser), standing water after rain (indicates drainage problems), loose interlock pavers, or new cracks. Address oil stains within days — petroleum products soften asphalt binder and create permanent staining on concrete.

Professional inspection every 3-5 years by a paving contractor can catch structural issues you might miss, especially base problems that aren't visible from the surface. This is particularly valuable for driveways approaching 15-20 years old when major maintenance or replacement decisions need to be made.

Need help finding a driveway contractor for repairs or maintenance? Ottawa Driveways can match you with local paving professionals for free estimates on crack filling, sealcoating, or interlock maintenance.

What material should I use to fill the expansion gap between my driveway and foundation wall in Ottawa?

Use a flexible, non-hardening material like closed-cell foam backer rod topped with polyurethane caulk, or a dedicated expansion joint filler designed for concrete applications. Never fill this gap with concrete, mortar, or rigid materials that will crack and allow water penetration.

The expansion gap between your driveway and foundation wall exists for a critical reason — **both surfaces expand and contract at different rates** throughout Ottawa's extreme temperature swings. Your foundation wall moves minimally, while your driveway (whether asphalt, concrete, or interlock) expands and contracts significantly as temperatures fluctuate from -30°C in winter to +35°C in summer. This creates a 60+ degree temperature differential that causes substantial material movement.

For most Ottawa driveways, the best approach is closed-cell foam backer rod (available at Home Depot, Lowe's, or masonry supply stores) inserted into the gap to the proper depth, then topped with a high-quality polyurethane caulk rated for exterior concrete applications. The backer rod prevents the caulk from sinking too deep into the gap and provides a proper backing surface. Choose backer rod diameter that's 25% larger than your gap width — it should compress slightly when inserted. Top with polyurethane caulk (not acrylic or latex) that remains flexible through freeze-thaw cycles and adheres well to both concrete and asphalt.

Ottawa's freeze-thaw conditions make material selection critical. Water that penetrates this joint will freeze and expand, potentially cracking your foundation wall or driveway edge. The filler material must remain flexible through 50+ freeze-thaw cycles per winter while maintaining a watertight seal. Rigid materials like concrete crack within the first winter, creating a larger water entry point than the original gap.

For wider gaps (over 25mm), consider dedicated expansion joint filler made from closed-cell foam or rubber specifically designed for concrete applications. These products are available at masonry supply stores and are designed to compress and expand with seasonal movement. Some are self-adhesive and don't require additional caulk.

Installation timing matters in Ottawa — perform this work during moderate temperatures (15-25°C) when both surfaces are at mid-range expansion. Avoid filling during extreme heat when materials are fully expanded, or during cold weather when they're contracted. Clean the gap thoroughly of debris, old caulk, and loose material before installation.

When to Hire a Pro: This is typically a straightforward DIY task for most homeowners. However, if you have multiple foundation settling issues, water penetration problems, or gaps wider than 50mm that suggest structural

movement, consult a foundation contractor to address underlying issues before sealing the gap.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Alvi Asphalt Paving Ltd
- Transitions Renovations
- Callandgone

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Q8

How do I keep my interlock driveway in Ottawa looking clean without using a pressure washer?

Regular sweeping, gentle scrubbing with dish soap, and targeted stain treatment will keep your Ottawa interlock driveway clean without pressure washing. Pressure washers can blast out polymeric sand from joints and damage paver surfaces, creating maintenance headaches in Ottawa's freeze-thaw climate.

Weekly maintenance is your best defense against buildup. Sweep your interlock driveway weekly with a stiff-bristled push broom to remove leaves, dirt, and debris before they stain or decompose in the joints. Pay special attention to areas under trees where organic matter accumulates — decomposing leaves create tannin stains that become harder to remove over time. In Ottawa's clay soil areas like Barrhaven and Orleans, regular sweeping prevents clay dust from settling into the paver texture and dulling the surface.

For general cleaning, mix warm water with a few drops of dish soap in a bucket and scrub sections with a stiff brush or push broom. This gentle approach removes most dirt, salt residue, and light staining without damaging the paver surface or washing out joint sand. Work in 10-foot sections, scrub thoroughly, then rinse with a garden hose on a gentle spray setting. The key is using enough water to rinse away soap and loosened dirt, but not so much pressure that you disturb the polymeric sand joints.

Oil stains from vehicles require immediate attention. Absorb fresh spills with cat litter or sand, let it sit for 30 minutes, then sweep up. For set-in oil stains, sprinkle baking soda on the area, let it sit overnight, then scrub with

dish soap and warm water. Commercial concrete degreasers also work well on interlock — apply according to manufacturer instructions and scrub with a stiff brush.

Salt and efflorescence (white chalky residue) are common Ottawa problems from winter de-icing and natural mineral leaching. Mix one part white vinegar with three parts water and scrub affected areas with a brush. The mild acid dissolves salt deposits and efflorescence without harming the pavers. Rinse thoroughly afterward. Never use muriatic acid or strong cleaners on interlock — they can etch the surface and fade colored pavers.

Weed and moss control in joints requires targeted treatment. Pull weeds by hand when they're small, or use a narrow weeding tool to remove roots from joints. For moss, mix equal parts water and white vinegar, spray on affected joints, let sit for 10 minutes, then scrub with an old toothbrush. Boiling water poured directly on weeds also works but requires multiple treatments.

Ottawa's winter conditions create unique cleaning challenges. Spring cleaning should focus on removing salt residue and winter sand that accumulates along driveway edges. The freeze-thaw cycles can push dirt and debris up from joints, making spring the ideal time for thorough cleaning and polymeric sand inspection.

Protect your joint sand during cleaning by avoiding high-pressure water and working in small sections. If you notice polymeric sand washing out during cleaning, stop immediately and let the area dry completely before reapplying sand to those joints. Maintaining intact joint sand is critical in Ottawa — it prevents weeds, insects, and water infiltration that leads to paver shifting during freeze-thaw cycles.

Seasonal timing matters for deep cleaning. Late spring (May) and early fall (September) are ideal when temperatures are moderate and you have time for thorough drying before winter or summer heat stress. Avoid cleaning during Ottawa's hottest summer days when soap can dry too quickly and leave residue.

Need help finding a contractor for interlock maintenance or polymeric sand replacement? Ottawa Driveways can match you with local paving professionals who understand Ottawa's unique climate challenges.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Vanguard Environmental
- The Granite shop
- Best Hand2Hand moving company

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Will an RV or heavy trailer parked on my asphalt driveway in Ottawa cause permanent damage over time?

Yes, parking an RV or heavy trailer on your asphalt driveway in Ottawa will likely cause permanent damage over time, especially if it's parked in the same spot repeatedly. The extent of damage depends on the weight, parking duration, asphalt thickness, base quality, and seasonal timing.

Weight and Pressure Concerns

Standard residential asphalt driveways in Ottawa are designed for typical passenger vehicles (2,000 to 3,000 kg) and light trucks. Most RVs weigh 4,000 to 15,000 kg, while loaded travel trailers range from 3,000 to 8,000 kg. This concentrated weight creates point loads at the tire contact patches that exceed what residential asphalt can handle long-term. The pressure is particularly damaging when the weight sits stationary for weeks or months, allowing the asphalt to deform and create permanent ruts or depressions.

Builder-grade asphalt driveways common in Ottawa subdivisions typically have only 75-100mm of total asphalt thickness over minimal base preparation. These thin sections cannot support heavy RV loads without eventual rutting, especially during Ottawa's hot summer months when asphalt softens. A quality residential driveway with 100-125mm of asphalt over proper granular base handles occasional heavy loads better, but even these will show wear from regular RV parking.

Ottawa Climate Makes It Worse

Ottawa's extreme temperature swings significantly worsen heavy vehicle damage. During summer heat waves when temperatures exceed 30°C, asphalt becomes soft and pliable. An RV parked on hot asphalt will sink into the surface, creating permanent tire impressions that remain visible even after the vehicle is moved. These ruts collect water, accelerate freeze-thaw damage in winter, and create tripping hazards.

Conversely, parking heavy vehicles on frozen asphalt during Ottawa winters can crack the brittle surface. The combination of concentrated weight and thermal stress from freeze-thaw cycling creates spider web cracking patterns around the tire contact areas. Once cracks form, water penetrates and expands during freezing, rapidly worsening the damage through repeated freeze-thaw cycles.

Seasonal Timing Matters

The worst time to park heavy vehicles on Ottawa asphalt is during hot weather (July-August) when surface temperatures can reach 50-60°C. At these temperatures, even properly installed asphalt becomes soft enough to deform under heavy loads. If you must park an RV on your driveway during summer, do it during cooler morning hours and move it frequently to prevent the same spot from bearing weight continuously.

Spring is also problematic because the asphalt may still be brittle from winter while the base beneath could be softened by frost thaw and spring moisture. This combination of rigid surface over soft base creates conditions for cracking and settling.

Minimizing Damage

If you must occasionally park an RV on your asphalt driveway, use **tire protection boards** or **plywood sheets** (minimum 19mm thick) under each tire to distribute the weight over a larger area. Move the vehicle every few days to prevent permanent impressions. Consider parking on the street if permitted by City of Ottawa bylaws, or investigate installing a concrete parking pad specifically designed for heavy vehicles.

When Professional Help Is Needed

If your driveway already shows rutting, cracking, or settling from heavy vehicle parking, have a paving contractor assess whether the damage can be patched or if sections need replacement. Minor rutting can sometimes be filled and overlaid, but significant base damage requires excavation and rebuilding. For regular RV storage, consider having a contractor install a reinforced concrete pad with proper base preparation designed for the vehicle's weight.

The most cost-effective approach is often building a dedicated RV parking area with thicker concrete (minimum 150mm) over engineered base rather than repeatedly repairing asphalt damage.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Rrenovatio
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- Regimbal

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What spring cleaning routine should I follow for my Ottawa asphalt driveway after snow melts?

Spring is the most critical time for Ottawa asphalt driveway maintenance — the damage from winter's freeze-thaw cycles, salt exposure, and snow plowing becomes visible once the snow melts, and addressing issues quickly prevents minor problems from becoming major repairs.

Start with a thorough inspection and cleaning in late March or early April once temperatures consistently stay above freezing. Begin by removing all debris — sand, salt residue, leaves, and winter accumulation that can trap moisture against the asphalt surface. Use a stiff broom or leaf blower for loose debris, then pressure wash or hose down the entire surface to remove salt buildup and embedded grime. Salt residue left on asphalt accelerates oxidation and brittleness, so thorough cleaning is essential after Ottawa's heavy winter salt applications.

Inspect every inch of your driveway for winter damage while the surface is clean and dry. Look for new cracks (especially along edges where snowplows operate), potholes, areas where the asphalt has become soft or "alligatored," and any sections that have settled or heaved due to frost action. Ottawa's 50+ freeze-thaw cycles each winter cause water to penetrate small cracks, freeze and expand, then thaw and allow more water entry — turning hairline cracks into major fissures over one winter season. Mark damaged areas with spray paint so you don't miss them during repairs.

Address crack repairs immediately before spring rains drive more water into the asphalt structure. Cracks wider than 5mm need professional hot-pour crack filler — this rubberized material remains flexible through Ottawa's extreme temperature swings and provides a permanent seal. Smaller cracks can be temporarily filled with cold-pour crack filler from hardware stores, but understand this is a short-term solution that will need professional attention within 1-2 years. Clean all cracks thoroughly with a wire brush or compressed air before filling to ensure proper adhesion.

Plan your sealcoating schedule based on when your driveway was last sealed. In Ottawa's harsh climate, asphalt driveways should be sealcoated every 2-3 years to protect against UV oxidation, water penetration, and salt damage. If your driveway hasn't been sealed in 3+ years, schedule sealcoating for late spring (May-June) when temperatures are consistently above 15°C with no rain forecast for 24-48 hours. Never sealcoat over wet surfaces or when temperatures might drop below 10°C overnight.

Check and improve drainage around your driveway edges. Spring snowmelt often reveals drainage problems that developed over winter — areas where water pools, edges that have settled, or spots where runoff flows toward your foundation instead of away. Ensure your driveway slopes at least 2% toward the street or drainage swales. Poor drainage is the fastest way to destroy an Ottawa driveway through freeze-thaw damage and base erosion.

For more extensive damage — multiple large cracks, potholes, or areas of alligator cracking — spring is the ideal time to get quotes from paving contractors for summer repairs. Ottawa's paving season runs May through October, with September being the busiest month. Booking repairs in spring often means better scheduling and pricing than waiting until peak season.

Need help finding a driveway contractor for repairs or maintenance? Ottawa Driveways can match you with local paving professionals who understand Ottawa's unique climate challenges and can provide free estimates for your spring maintenance needs.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- Regimbal
- ALM Construction & Landscaping Inc.
- Jaiko Cleaning Services

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Q11

What is the best way to maintain a gravel driveway in rural Ottawa without professional regrading?

Gravel driveways in rural Ottawa require regular maintenance to handle freeze-thaw cycles, spring washouts, and heavy snow loads, but homeowners can manage most upkeep tasks with the right approach and timing.

The key to maintaining a gravel driveway without professional regrading lies in **preventive maintenance and understanding how Ottawa's climate affects loose stone surfaces**. Rural Ottawa's clay soils, combined with 50+ freeze-thaw cycles per winter, cause gravel to migrate, settle unevenly, and develop ruts and potholes. Spring snowmelt and heavy rains wash fines out of the gravel matrix, leaving loose stones that scatter under vehicle traffic.

Start with proper drainage management — the most critical factor for any gravel driveway. Walk your driveway after heavy rains to identify where water pools or runs across the surface instead of off it. Use a rake or shovel to

create shallow ditches (swales) along the edges to direct water away from the driving surface. Clear culverts and drainage ditches of leaves, debris, and sediment buildup twice yearly. Poor drainage turns gravel driveways into muddy, rutted messes that require expensive professional regrading to fix.

Rake and redistribute gravel monthly during the driving season (April through November). Use a landscape rake or steel-tined rake to pull gravel from the edges back toward the center, fill in ruts and low spots, and break up any hardpan that develops. This prevents the common problem where all the gravel migrates to the sides, leaving the center driving surface exposed to subgrade. Pay special attention to areas where you turn the steering wheel — these spots develop ruts fastest.

Add fresh gravel annually in late spring after frost comes out of the ground but before summer heat sets in. Rural Ottawa driveways typically need 1 to 2 cubic yards of fresh gravel per 100 feet of driveway length each year to replace material lost to washouts, snow plowing, and normal traffic. **Use 19mm (3/4-inch) crushed limestone or granular A** — avoid rounded river rock or pea gravel that doesn't compact and lock together. Spread the new material with a rake and compact it by driving over it repeatedly or rent a plate compactor for better results.

Manage weeds and vegetation aggressively because plant growth destabilizes the gravel matrix and creates drainage problems. Apply granular weed killer designed for driveways in early spring before weeds emerge. Hand-pull larger weeds and cut back encroaching grass and brush along the edges. Vegetation growing through gravel holds moisture, promotes freeze-thaw damage, and makes snow removal more difficult.

Winter maintenance requires a different approach than paved driveways. Plow or shovel conservatively to avoid scraping away gravel with the snow. Set plow blades slightly higher than you would on asphalt. Use sand instead of salt for traction — salt accelerates the breakdown of limestone gravel and washes away with spring melt. Mark the driveway edges with reflective stakes so snow removal equipment doesn't drift into soft shoulders or landscaping.

Address problem areas immediately before they spread. Fill potholes and deep ruts with fresh gravel as soon as they appear — waiting until spring allows water to penetrate deeper and destabilize larger areas. For persistent soft spots, you may need to dig out the affected area, add geotextile fabric, and rebuild with fresh granular material.

When to hire a professional: If your driveway has widespread base failure (soft, muddy areas that don't firm up), needs major drainage work like culvert installation, or requires more than 6 inches of fresh gravel to restore proper grade. Professional regrading with proper base preparation costs \$3 to \$6 per square foot but lasts 8 to 12 years with good maintenance.

Rural gravel driveways can provide decades of service with consistent maintenance, but they require more hands-on attention than paved surfaces — budget 4 to 6 hours of maintenance work per year for every 100 feet of driveway length.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- The Next Reno
- Best Hand2Hand moving company
- The Deck Store Inc

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Q12

What should I be checking on my driveway each spring and fall to catch problems early before they get expensive?

A twice-yearly driveway inspection is one of the smartest things Ottawa homeowners can do to avoid expensive repairs. Our winters are brutally hard on driveways — with frost penetrating over a metre deep, 200cm of snowfall, and dozens of freeze-thaw cycles, damage accumulates every single year. Catching problems when they're small saves you thousands compared to waiting until failure is obvious.

Spring Inspection (April to Early May)

Spring is when winter damage reveals itself. Wait until the snow is fully melted and the ground has started to dry — usually mid-April in most of Ottawa, though properties in shaded areas of Stittsville and Carp may take longer.

- **Check for new cracks.** Walk the entire driveway and note any cracks that weren't there last fall. In asphalt, cracks wider than 3mm should be sealed before the next winter. Small cracks that go through one freeze-thaw cycle without repair can double or triple in size
- **Look for heaving or settlement.** Stand at one end and look down the length of the driveway. Any new bumps or dips indicate frost heave or base failure underneath. Minor heaving often settles back on its own by June, but persistent unevenness signals a drainage problem
- **Inspect the edges.** Driveway edges are the most vulnerable area, especially in Nepean and Orleans neighbourhoods where driveways meet grass. Look for crumbling, erosion, or chunks that snowplows may have caught
- **Check drainage.** After a rain, watch where water flows. Puddles that sit for more than an hour indicate low spots or grading issues. Standing water accelerates deterioration in every driveway material

- **Examine interlock joints.** If you have interlock pavers, check whether polymeric sand has washed out of the joints. Empty joints let pavers shift, and weeds colonize quickly in Ottawa's warm spring weather

Fall Inspection (September to October)

The fall check is about preparing your driveway to survive the coming winter. Do this before the first frost, which typically hits Ottawa in mid-to-late October.

- **Seal any cracks found.** This is the single most important fall task. Water that enters cracks will freeze, expand, and destroy the surrounding material over winter. Crack filler costs \$10 to \$25 per tube and takes 30 minutes for most driveways
- **Clear vegetation.** Remove any weeds or grass growing through cracks or along edges. Roots widen cracks and create entry points for water. In Ottawa's fall, this is also the time to clear leaf accumulation, which traps moisture against the surface
- **Check sealcoat condition.** If your asphalt was sealcoated, look for grey, faded areas where the sealcoat has worn through. These exposed areas will absorb more water over winter. If more than 30% of the surface shows wear, it's time to resealcoat before winter
- **Verify grading away from the garage.** Ensure water flows away from your garage door, not toward it. Settling over the summer can change drainage patterns. Even a minor reverse grade will channel snowmelt into your garage all winter

Keep a Simple Log

Take a few photos during each inspection and keep them on your phone. Comparing year-over-year helps you spot gradual deterioration before it becomes critical. A crack that grows 50% in one winter is telling you there's a base issue that resurfacing alone won't fix.

If your spring or fall inspection reveals issues beyond simple crack filling, connect with a contractor through Ottawa Driveways to get a professional assessment before winter sets in.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- MAK Construction and Development Inc
- Diamond renovations

- The Granite shop

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Can I sealcoat my asphalt driveway myself in Ottawa or should I hire someone to do it?

DIY sealcoating is absolutely doable for Ottawa homeowners, but timing and preparation are everything in our climate.

When to Sealcoat in Ottawa

Your window is mid-May through late September. You need at least 48 hours of dry weather with overnight temperatures staying above 10°C. Ottawa's spring can be unpredictable — a surprise frost in early May will ruin a fresh sealcoat application. Most homeowners in Barrhaven and Kanata aim for June or early July to be safe.

Preparing the Surface

This is where most DIY jobs fail. Start by pressure washing the entire driveway to remove winter salt residue, dirt, and debris. Ottawa's heavy road salt use means your driveway likely has a white mineral film that prevents sealant from bonding. Fill any cracks wider than 6mm with rubberized crack filler and let it cure for 24 hours. Oil stains from your car need a degreaser treatment — sealcoat won't stick to petroleum-soaked asphalt.

Choosing the Right Product

For Ottawa driveways, look for coal-tar or asphalt-emulsion sealers rated for freeze-thaw cycles. Our city experiences over 40 freeze-thaw cycles per winter, so cheap sealers from big-box stores often crack within one season. Budget \$80 to \$150 for materials to cover a standard two-car driveway (roughly 45 square metres). A 5-gallon pail typically covers about 35 to 45 square metres.

Application Tips

- Start at the garage and work toward the street so you don't trap yourself
- Use a squeegee applicator for even coverage, not a roller
- Apply two thin coats rather than one thick coat, waiting 12 to 24 hours between coats
- Edge carefully along garden beds and interlock borders

What It Costs: DIY vs. Professional

DIY materials for a standard Ottawa driveway run \$80 to \$150. A professional sealcoating job in Ottawa typically costs \$250 to \$500 for the same driveway. The savings are real, but professionals bring commercial-grade equipment and higher-quality sealant that often lasts an extra season.

When to Skip DIY

If your driveway has alligator cracking, large potholes, or significant heaving from Ottawa's deep frost line (which reaches 1.2 to 1.5 metres), sealcoating alone won't help. You need repairs first.

Need help assessing whether your driveway is ready for a DIY sealcoat or needs professional attention? Browse contractors on **Ottawa Driveways** to connect with local driveway specialists in your neighbourhood.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- Floor-2-Wall Inc
- Prime Property Works
- Denys Builds Designs Renovations

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Q14

What's the best way to get rid of weeds growing between my interlock driveway pavers in Kanata?

Weeds pushing through interlock joints are one of the most common complaints from Ottawa homeowners, especially after our long winters when polymeric sand breaks down.

Why Weeds Keep Coming Back

Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles — we get over 40 per winter — crack and displace the sand between your pavers. Once gaps open up, windblown seeds settle in and germinate quickly during our warm, wet springs. Neighbourhoods like Kanata South and Stittsville with newer subdivisions often see this within 3 to 5 years of installation.

Manual Removal (Best First Step)

Pull weeds by hand or use a paver joint scraper tool (available at Ottawa hardware stores for \$15 to \$25). Work after a rain when the ground is soft. A simple flathead screwdriver works in a pinch. Get the full root — dandelions in particular send taproots deep into the base material.

Boiling Water Method

Pour boiling water directly on weeds growing in joints. This kills the plant and root without chemicals. It takes 2 to 3 applications over a week for stubborn weeds. This method is safe for your pavers and won't affect nearby garden beds — popular with homeowners in Orleans who have interlock driveways bordering flower gardens.

Vinegar Solution

Mix horticultural vinegar (20% acetic acid, not kitchen vinegar) with a few drops of dish soap. Spray directly on weeds on a sunny day. This burns the foliage and weakens the root. Cost is about \$12 to \$18 per litre at garden centres. Be careful near limestone pavers — the acid can etch the surface.

The Real Fix: Re-Sand the Joints

Weed removal is temporary unless you re-sand. Sweep polymeric sand into all joints, mist with water to activate, and the sand hardens into a weed-resistant barrier. A 20 kg bag (\$25 to \$40) covers roughly 10 to 15 square metres depending on joint width. This is the single most effective long-term solution.

Chemical Herbicides — Use Carefully

Ontario's cosmetic pesticide ban (Ontario Regulation 63/09) restricts what you can use on residential properties. Glyphosate-based products are banned for cosmetic use. Stick to approved alternatives like iron-based herbicides or the manual methods above.

Prevention Schedule

Inspect joints every spring after the snow melts. Ottawa's heavy snowfall (averaging 200 cm per season) and plough damage accelerate sand loss. Top up polymeric sand annually in problem areas.

If your interlock joints are badly eroded and weeds have taken over large sections, it may be time for professional re-sanding or relaying. Check out **Ottawa Driveways** to find interlock specialists near you.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- Eastern Residential Solution
- Speedy Pete's Inc
- Renovo Construction

Q15

How much does it cost to rent a pressure washer and clean my driveway myself in Ottawa?

Pressure washing your driveway is one of the most satisfying and affordable DIY maintenance tasks for Ottawa homeowners. Here's what to budget.

Rental Costs in Ottawa

Most equipment rental shops in Ottawa (Home Depot, Sunbelt Rentals, Lou-Tec on Merivale) charge \$50 to \$90 for a 4-hour rental of a gas-powered pressure washer in the 3,000 to 3,500 PSI range. Full-day rentals run \$80 to \$130. Electric units are cheaper (\$35 to \$60 per day) but lack the power for deep-cleaning concrete or removing winter salt stains.

What PSI Do You Need?

For asphalt driveways, use 2,500 to 3,000 PSI with a 25-degree fan tip. Higher pressure can gouge asphalt. For concrete driveways, 3,000 to 3,500 PSI handles most stains. For interlock pavers, stay at 2,000 to 2,500 PSI — too much pressure blasts out the joint sand, creating more problems. Many Nepean and Gloucester homeowners learn this the hard way.

Best Time to Pressure Wash

Late April to mid-May is ideal in Ottawa. The snow has melted, winter salt and sand residue is sitting on the surface, and you can address any damage before it worsens through summer. Avoid pressure washing if overnight temperatures are still dipping below freezing — water trapped in cracks expands and causes spalling.

Step-by-Step Process

- **Clear the driveway** — move cars, planters, and debris
- **Pre-treat stains** — apply degreaser to oil spots 15 minutes before washing
- **Work in sections** — move the wand in overlapping passes, keeping a consistent 15 to 20 cm distance from the surface
- **Wash downhill** — direct dirty water toward the street, not your garage or garden
- **Let it dry fully** — wait 24 to 48 hours before applying any sealant

Total DIY Cost Breakdown

- Pressure washer rental: \$50 to \$130
- Concrete/driveway cleaner solution: \$15 to \$30
- Degreaser for oil stains: \$10 to \$20
- Surface cleaner attachment (optional, speeds the job): \$40 to \$60 to buy
- **Total: \$75 to \$240** for a full DIY clean

Professional Comparison

A professional driveway pressure washing in Ottawa runs \$150 to \$350 depending on size and condition. The DIY route saves money but takes 2 to 4 hours of physical work.

Safety Notes

Wear closed-toe boots and safety glasses. Never point the wand at people, pets, or windows. The spray can strip paint and crack glass at close range.

Want a professional clean or need help with stains that won't come out? **Ottawa Driveways** connects you with local contractors who handle driveway cleaning and restoration across the city.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- Prism Services
- Nic's D.U.C.T Works Inc

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I've got a few small cracks in my asphalt driveway — can I fill them myself before winter hits?

Absolutely — filling small cracks before Ottawa's winter is one of the smartest maintenance moves you can make. Water seeping into cracks freezes, expands, and turns hairline cracks into potholes by spring.

Why Timing Matters in Ottawa

Our frost line reaches 1.2 to 1.5 metres deep. Any water that gets into asphalt cracks in October will freeze and thaw repeatedly through November, creating significant damage before the ground fully freezes in December. Aim to do crack repairs by mid-October at the latest. September is ideal — warm enough for products to cure properly.

What You Can Fix Yourself

DIY crack filling works well for cracks up to about 12mm (half an inch) wide. Anything wider than 20mm, or areas where the asphalt has sunk or heaved, needs professional repair. If you see alligator cracking (a web pattern), that indicates base failure — no amount of crack filler will fix it.

Materials You'll Need

- **Rubberized crack filler** (pour-in style for cracks under 12mm): \$12 to \$20 per bottle, each covers about 15 linear metres
- **Backer rod foam** (for cracks 12 to 20mm wide): \$5 to \$10 per roll
- **Caulking-style crack filler** (for precision application): \$8 to \$15 per tube
- **Wire brush or flathead screwdriver** for cleaning out debris

Total cost for a typical Barrhaven or Stittsville driveway with moderate cracking: \$25 to \$60.

How to Fill Cracks Properly

- **Clean out the crack** — use a wire brush, flathead screwdriver, or compressed air to remove dirt, sand, and loose asphalt. This step is critical for adhesion.
- **For deeper cracks**, press backer rod foam into the crack leaving about 6mm of space on top for the filler.
- **Apply crack filler** — pour or caulk the product into the crack, slightly overfilling. It will shrink as it cures.
- **Smooth the surface** — use a putty knife or the back of a trowel to press filler flush with the driveway.
- **Let it cure** — most products need 24 to 48 hours before traffic. Check the label for temperature requirements (usually above 10°C).

Common Mistakes

- Filling cracks when rain is forecast — water prevents bonding
- Not cleaning the crack thoroughly — filler pops out within weeks
- Using concrete patch on asphalt — they're not compatible and will crumble
- Overfilling without smoothing — creates a trip hazard and looks messy

Annual Inspection Habit

Walk your driveway every September and mark cracks with chalk. Address them all in one session. This simple habit can extend your driveway's life by 5 to 10 years in Ottawa's harsh climate.

If you discover extensive cracking or base issues during your inspection, it's time to consult a professional.

Ottawa Driveways can connect you with experienced asphalt contractors in your area who handle repairs and resurfacing.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Callandgone
- Floor-2-Wall Inc
- Alvi Asphalt Paving Ltd

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Q17

What's a good annual maintenance schedule for my driveway in Ottawa with our crazy winters?

Ottawa's climate is brutal on driveways — deep frost, 200 cm of average snowfall, salt trucks, and freeze-thaw cycles that crack even the toughest surfaces. A simple seasonal schedule keeps your driveway in shape and avoids expensive repairs.

Spring (April to May)

- **Inspect for winter damage** — Walk the entire driveway looking for new cracks, heaved sections, potholes, and chipped edges. Mark problem areas with chalk.
- **Clean thoroughly** — Sweep off sand and gravel left by ploughs and winter tires. Pressure wash to remove salt residue, which is corrosive to both asphalt and concrete.
- **Clear drainage** — Make sure water flows away from the driveway and garage. Ottawa's spring melt can overwhelm drainage if edges are blocked with debris.
- **Re-sand interlock joints** — If you have interlock pavers, check for joint sand loss. Ottawa winters are especially hard on polymeric sand.

Summer (June to August)

- **Fill cracks** — This is the best time for crack filling. Warm temperatures (above 15°C) help products cure fully. Address anything wider than a pencil line.
- **Sealcoat asphalt** — Every 2 to 3 years, apply sealcoat during a dry stretch in June or July. Budget \$80 to \$150 for DIY materials on a standard driveway.
- **Treat stains** — Oil drips, rust stains, and barbecue grease are easiest to remove when fresh. Use a degreaser and stiff brush.
- **Edge maintenance** — Trim grass and weeds encroaching on driveway edges. In neighbourhoods like Orleans and Gloucester, this is a constant battle.

Fall (September to October)

- **Final crack fill** — Last chance before frost. Prioritize any new cracks found during summer.
- **Apply weed prevention** — Sweep polymeric sand into interlock joints one more time to prevent spring weed growth.
- **Check driveway markers** — Install reflective driveway stakes so plough operators can see your driveway edges. This prevents edge damage, which is a huge issue in suburban areas like Barrhaven.
- **Store sealant properly** — Any leftover sealcoat or crack filler should be stored above freezing. These products are ruined if they freeze.

Winter (November to March)

- **Use the right de-icer** — Avoid rock salt (sodium chloride) on concrete — it causes spalling. Use calcium chloride or sand for traction instead. On asphalt, salt is less damaging but still harsh. Budget \$15 to \$30 for a season's supply of quality de-icer.

- **Shovel smart** — Use a plastic-edged shovel on interlock and stamped concrete. Metal blades gouge the surface.
- **Plough blade height** — If you hire a plough service, make sure they set the blade 10 to 15mm above the surface to avoid scraping.

Annual Cost for DIY Maintenance

Following this schedule costs roughly \$100 to \$300 per year in materials. Compare that to \$3,000 to \$8,000 for asphalt resurfacing or \$10,000+ for full interlock replacement. Prevention pays.

Need professional help with any seasonal maintenance step? **Ottawa Driveways** lists local contractors across Ottawa who handle everything from sealcoating to full driveway restoration.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- Pure Flow Water Solutions inc.
- Vanguard Environmental
- Regimbal

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Q18

How do I remove an oil stain from my concrete driveway without wrecking the surface?

Oil stains on concrete are one of the most common driveway complaints in Ottawa. Whether it's a slow transmission leak or a lawnmower spill, the key is acting quickly and using the right method for the stain's age.

Fresh Oil Stains (Less Than 24 Hours)

Act fast — oil hasn't penetrated deeply yet.

- **Absorb the surface oil** — Cover the stain generously with cat litter (clay-based, not clumping), baking soda, or cornstarch. Grind it in with your boot.
- **Wait 30 to 60 minutes** — Let the absorbent material pull oil out of the concrete pores.
- **Sweep up and repeat** — Apply a second round if the stain is still dark.
- **Scrub with dish soap** — Mix a few tablespoons of dish soap with hot water, scrub with a stiff-bristle brush, and rinse.

This method handles most fresh spills and costs virtually nothing.

Set-In Oil Stains (Days to Weeks Old)

Once oil has soaked into the concrete, you need stronger chemistry.

- **Commercial concrete degreaser** (\$15 to \$30 at Ottawa hardware stores) — Products like Gunk or Purple Power are designed for this. Apply, let sit for 15 to 30 minutes, scrub, and pressure wash off.
- **TSP (trisodium phosphate)** — Mix 15 mL per litre of hot water, apply to the stain, scrub, and rinse. Wear gloves and eye protection. TSP is effective but harsh.
- **Poultice method** — Mix cat litter with acetone or mineral spirits into a paste, spread it over the stain 6mm thick, cover with plastic wrap, and let sit overnight. The solvent dissolves the oil while the absorbent pulls it out. This works remarkably well on deep stains.

Old, Stubborn Stains (Months to Years)

Deeply penetrated oil stains may never fully disappear from concrete without resurfacing. However, you can significantly fade them:

- **Muriatic acid** (available at pool supply stores, \$10 to \$20) — Dilute 1 part acid to 10 parts water, apply to the stain, let fizz for 5 minutes, and rinse thoroughly. This etches the surface slightly, removing the top stained layer. **Use extreme caution** — wear gloves, goggles, and work in ventilation.
- **Repeat degreaser treatments** — Three or four applications over a few weeks can progressively lighten old stains.

Other Common Driveway Stains

- **Rust stains** (from metal furniture or tools) — Use a product containing oxalic acid. CLR or lemon juice works on mild rust. Cost: \$8 to \$15.
- **Paint drips** — Scrape dried latex paint with a putty knife, then use a heat gun on stubborn spots. For oil-based paint, mineral spirits on a rag works but test a small area first.

- **Leaf/tannin stains** — Common in Ottawa's fall. Pressure wash with a concrete brightener containing oxalic acid.

Prevention Tips

Place a drip pan or cardboard under vehicles with known leaks. Seal your concrete driveway every 3 to 5 years to reduce oil absorption. Many homeowners in Nepean and Kanata apply a penetrating concrete sealer (\$40 to \$80 for a two-car driveway) that makes future stain cleanup much easier.

For stains that won't budge or if you're considering a full driveway cleaning and reseal, **Ottawa Driveways** can help you find local concrete specialists who serve your neighbourhood.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Regimbal

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How often should I re-sand the joints on my interlock driveway and what kind of sand do I use?

Joint sand is the unsung hero of your interlock driveway. Without it, pavers shift, weeds invade, and ants build colonies underneath. In Ottawa's climate, re-sanding is a regular maintenance task, not a one-time job.

How Often to Re-Sand in Ottawa

Plan on inspecting joints every spring and topping up as needed. Most Ottawa interlock driveways need significant re-sanding every 2 to 3 years. However, heavy plough traffic, salt use, and our freeze-thaw cycles (40+ per winter) can accelerate sand loss. Homeowners in Barrhaven and Stittsville with long driveways that get ploughed frequently often need annual touch-ups.

Polymeric Sand vs. Regular Sand

There are two main options:

- **Polymeric sand** (\$25 to \$45 per 20 kg bag) — The recommended choice. Contains a polymer binder that hardens when wet, creating a firm joint that resists weeds, ants, and washout. One bag covers 10 to 15 square metres depending on joint width. Brands like Techniseal and Alliance are widely available in Ottawa.
- **Regular jointing sand** (\$5 to \$10 per bag) — Much cheaper but washes out easily, offers no weed or insect protection, and needs replacing far more often. Only use this as a temporary measure.

For Ottawa driveways, polymeric sand is worth the extra cost. Our heavy rain, snowmelt, and freeze-thaw conditions destroy regular sand within one season.

How to Re-Sand Your Interlock Driveway

- **Choose a dry day** with no rain forecast for 24 hours. Temperature should be above 15°C for polymeric sand to activate properly.
- **Clean the joints** — Use a pressure washer (2,000 to 2,500 PSI max) or a stiff broom to remove old, loose sand, debris, and weed roots. Joints should be at least 25mm deep for new sand to bond.
- **Make sure pavers are completely dry** — Polymeric sand bonds to wet surfaces prematurely, causing a hazy film on your pavers that's nearly impossible to remove. This is the number one DIY mistake.
- **Pour and sweep** — Dump sand onto the driveway and sweep it into joints using a push broom. Work in small sections. Sweep diagonally across the joint pattern.
- **Compact** — Use a plate compactor (rent for \$50 to \$80 per day) to vibrate sand deep into the joints. This step is critical and often skipped by DIYers.

- **Sweep off excess** — Remove ALL sand from paver surfaces before wetting. Any polymeric sand left on top will harden into a permanent haze.
- **Mist with water** — Use a gentle shower setting on your hose. Soak the joints without flooding them. Water activates the polymer binder.
- **Stay off it** — Avoid foot traffic for 24 hours and vehicle traffic for 48 hours.

Common Mistakes

- Applying polymeric sand to damp pavers (causes white haze)
- Skipping the plate compactor (sand settles and leaves gaps)
- Not cleaning out old sand first (new sand sits too high and won't bond)
- Applying before rain (washes out before curing)

Cost for a Typical Ottawa Driveway

A standard two-car interlock driveway (40 to 50 square metres) needs 3 to 5 bags of polymeric sand: \$75 to \$225 in materials, plus \$50 to \$80 for compactor rental. Total DIY cost: \$125 to \$305.

If your pavers have shifted significantly or the base has settled unevenly, re-sanding alone won't solve the problem. **Ottawa Driveways** can connect you with interlock professionals in your area who handle joint restoration and paver releveling.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Somar Contracting Inc.
- Prism Services
- Transitions Renovations

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Q20

What's the best way to clean up the edges of my driveway where the grass keeps creeping in?

Driveway edge creep is a constant battle in Ottawa, especially in established neighbourhoods like Nepean, Alta Vista, and Old Ottawa South where mature lawns aggressively encroach on driveway borders.

Why Edges Deteriorate

Ottawa's cycle of frost heave and spring thaw pushes soil and grass toward your driveway. Snow ploughs pile snow on edges all winter, compressing the lawn into the driveway border. By spring, the clean edge you had in September has disappeared under 5 cm of turf.

Manual Edge Cleanup (Best DIY Method)

A half-moon edging tool (\$20 to \$35) is the most effective tool for this job. Here's the process:

- **Mark your line** — Stretch a string line or garden hose along the original driveway edge. On asphalt, the edge is usually visible as a slightly raised lip underneath the encroaching grass.
- **Cut along the edge** — Drive the half-moon edger straight down along the driveway edge, cutting through grass and roots. Apply firm foot pressure.
- **Remove the strip** — Pull out the cut grass strip and shake off loose soil. Compost the green waste.
- **Clean the gap** — Use a flat shovel or trowel to remove compacted soil from the driveway edge, exposing the full width of the asphalt or concrete.
- **Optional: install edging** — For a lasting solution, install plastic or aluminum driveway edging (\$1.50 to \$3.00 per linear metre) to create a physical barrier.

Power Edging Option

A string trimmer turned on its side does quick edge work. Hold it vertically and walk along the driveway edge. This takes 15 to 20 minutes for a typical two-car driveway. For a cleaner cut, dedicated power edgers are available to rent for \$35 to \$50 per day in Ottawa.

Preventing Regrowth

- **Edging material** — Pound in aluminum or steel landscape edging flush with the driveway surface. This stops root creep underground. Budget \$40 to \$80 for a full driveway perimeter.
- **Gravel border** — Some homeowners in Kanata and Orleans create a 10 to 15 cm gravel strip between lawn and driveway. This creates a mow strip and suppresses grass encroachment.
- **Edge twice per year** — A quick pass in late May and again in September keeps edges sharp year-round. Each session takes about 20 minutes once you've done the initial cleanup.

Dealing with Heaved Edges

If frost heave has pushed your driveway edges up or the asphalt is crumbling at the edges, edging alone won't fix it. Edge crumbling is common on driveways in Ottawa that are 15+ years old. The asphalt edge needs professional repair — either patching with hot mix or installing a concrete curb.

Cost Summary

- Half-moon edger: \$20 to \$35 (one-time purchase)
- Aluminum edging: \$40 to \$80 for full perimeter
- Power edger rental: \$35 to \$50 per day
- Professional edge repair: \$200 to \$600 depending on severity

If your driveway edges are crumbling or the asphalt has broken away, that's beyond a DIY edging job. Browse **Ottawa Driveways** to find contractors who specialize in driveway edge repair and restoration in your part of the city.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- Capital City Drywall
- Demontigny Carpentry
- Humble Homes - property maintenance

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Q21

What should be on my fall prep checklist to get my driveway through an Ottawa winter without major damage?

Getting your driveway winter-ready before the first hard frost in Ottawa (usually late October to early November) is the single best way to prevent costly spring repairs. Here's a complete fall checklist.

1. Fill All Cracks — Top Priority

Every crack is a future pothole. Water enters, freezes to -20°C or colder, expands by 9%, and breaks the asphalt or concrete apart. Walk the entire driveway and fill every crack wider than 3mm with rubberized crack filler. Do this while daytime temperatures are still above 10°C — product won't cure properly in cold weather. Budget \$20 to \$50 for materials.

2. Sealcoat if Due

If your asphalt driveway hasn't been sealed in 2 to 3 years and it's looking grey and dry, get a sealcoat applied before mid-October. The sealant creates a waterproof barrier that prevents moisture infiltration all winter. DIY cost: \$80 to \$150. Professional: \$250 to \$500.

3. Clean the Surface

Sweep off all leaves, dirt, and debris. Decomposing leaves trap moisture against the surface and create staining. This is especially important for concrete and interlock driveways where tannin stains can become permanent.

4. Address Drainage Issues

Water pooling on or beside your driveway is a winter disaster waiting to happen. Check that:

- The driveway slopes away from your garage (minimum 2% grade per Ontario Building Code)
- Catch basins and channel drains are clear of leaves and debris
- Downspouts direct water away from the driveway edge

In flat neighbourhoods like Gloucester and Orleans, drainage problems are common and cause the worst freeze-thaw damage.

5. Re-Sand Interlock Joints

If you have interlock pavers, top up polymeric sand in any joints that have lost sand over summer. Full joints prevent water from getting under the pavers and freezing, which causes heaving and shifting. One bag of polymeric sand (\$25 to \$45) is usually enough for touch-ups.

6. Install Driveway Markers

This is often overlooked but critical. Place reflective driveway stakes (\$15 to \$25 for a set) every 2 to 3 metres along both edges. Snow plough operators use these to see where your driveway ends and the lawn begins. Without markers, ploughs routinely gouge driveway edges — especially in Barrhaven and Kanata where contracted ploughing is common.

7. Stock Up on the Right De-Icer

- **For concrete:** Use calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) or sand. Avoid sodium chloride (rock salt) — it causes surface spalling.
- **For asphalt:** Calcium chloride or rock salt both work, though calcium chloride is less corrosive.
- **For interlock:** Sand for traction is safest. Some de-icers can discolour pavers.
- Budget \$30 to \$60 for a winter's supply of quality de-icer.

8. Photograph Your Driveway

Take photos of the current condition, including any existing damage. This gives you a baseline to compare against in spring and is essential if you need to make an insurance claim for unusual damage (ice storm, tree fall, etc.).

9. Check Your Snow Removal Plan

If you hire a plough service, confirm they'll set their blade above the driveway surface. Metal blades dragged on asphalt or concrete cause scratching and surface damage. For interlock, insist on a rubber-edged blade.

Total Fall Prep Budget: \$100 to \$300

That's a fraction of what spring repairs cost if water damage goes unchecked through Ottawa's 5-month winter.

Want professional help winterizing your driveway or need repairs before the frost hits? **Ottawa Driveways** connects you with local driveway contractors across Ottawa who can get the work done before winter arrives.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- Grunt Work 4 Grunts
- Speedy Pete's Inc
- Custom By Arie

[View all contractors ?](#)

How do I know when a driveway problem is too big for DIY and I actually need to call a professional?

Knowing when to put down the crack filler and pick up the phone is a skill that saves Ottawa homeowners money in the long run. Some driveway issues get exponentially worse — and more expensive — when handled incorrectly.

Signs You Need a Professional

Alligator Cracking (Interconnected Web Pattern)

This pattern of interconnected cracks resembling reptile skin means the base layer beneath your asphalt has failed. No amount of crack filler or sealcoat will fix a structural base problem. The driveway needs to be milled, the base repaired or replaced, and new asphalt laid. In Ottawa, this repair runs \$2,500 to \$6,000 for a typical two-car driveway. Trying to patch alligator cracking yourself is throwing money away — it'll return within one freeze-thaw season.

Heaving or Sinking Sections

Ottawa's frost line reaches 1.2 to 1.5 metres deep. When the base material under your driveway wasn't compacted properly or drainage is poor, sections heave up in winter and sink in spring. If you have a section that's risen or dropped more than 25mm, the base needs professional excavation and recompaction. This is common in subdivisions across Stittsville and Riverside South built on clay soil.

Potholes Larger Than a Dinner Plate

Small divots can be filled with cold patch asphalt (\$15 to \$25 per bag). But potholes larger than about 30 cm across or deeper than 5 cm need proper hot-mix asphalt repair with base compaction. Cold patch in large potholes is temporary — it loosens and breaks apart within one Ottawa winter. Professional pothole repair costs \$150 to \$400 per hole depending on size.

Standing Water or Grading Issues

If water pools on your driveway after rain or snowmelt and doesn't drain within 30 minutes, you have a grading problem. The Ontario Building Code requires a minimum 2% slope for drainage away from structures. Re-grading a driveway is heavy equipment work — not a DIY project. Expect \$1,500 to \$4,000 for professional regrading.

Interlock Pavers That Have Shifted Significantly

A few slightly uneven pavers can be lifted and relaid by a handy homeowner. But if large sections have shifted, creating gaps of 10mm or more, the base has likely failed. Professional releveling involves lifting the pavers,

regrading and compacting the base, and relaying everything. Cost: \$8 to \$15 per square foot in Ottawa.

Crumbling Concrete

Surface scaling (where thin layers of concrete flake off) from salt damage or age can sometimes be treated with resurfacing products. But if the concrete is crumbling through its full depth, or rebar is exposed, you need replacement. Concrete driveway replacement in Ottawa costs \$8 to \$15 per square foot.

The Cost of Waiting Too Long

Here's what Ottawa homeowners often don't realize: a \$300 professional repair in September becomes a \$3,000 problem by April if water gets into the damaged area and goes through 40+ freeze-thaw cycles. The math almost always favours early professional intervention for structural issues.

What Stays in DIY Territory

- Hairline to moderate cracks (under 12mm wide)
- Surface cleaning and pressure washing
- Sealcoating in good condition (no base failure)
- Joint re-sanding on stable interlock
- Edge trimming and cosmetic cleanup
- Minor cold-patch fills for small holes

Getting Quotes

Always get 2 to 3 quotes for any professional driveway work. Ask whether the contractor carries WSIB coverage (required in Ontario for workplace injury protection) and whether they guarantee their base work through at least one full winter season.

When you've identified a problem that's beyond DIY, **Ottawa Driveways** is the place to find experienced local contractors who understand Ottawa's unique climate challenges and can provide honest assessments of what your driveway actually needs.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- The Next Reno

- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes
- Joe Imerti Contracting

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Q23

How much would it cost me to do basic driveway maintenance myself for a year versus paying someone in Ottawa?

This is one of the most practical questions Ottawa homeowners can ask. The numbers tell a clear story — DIY maintenance is significantly cheaper, but professional service has its place.

DIY Annual Maintenance Costs (Two-Car Asphalt Driveway)

Here's a realistic yearly budget for doing everything yourself:

- **Spring pressure wash** (rental): \$50 to \$90
- **Crack filler** (rubberized, 1 to 2 bottles): \$20 to \$40
- **Sealcoating materials** (every 2 to 3 years, annualized): \$30 to \$50 per year
- **De-icer/salt** (winter season): \$30 to \$60
- **Driveway markers** (replace as needed): \$10 to \$15
- **Edge maintenance tools** (amortized): \$10 to \$15
- **Miscellaneous** (brushes, squeegees, degreaser): \$15 to \$25

DIY Total: \$165 to \$295 per year

Your first year will cost more because you're buying tools — half-moon edger (\$25), squeegee applicator (\$30), stiff-bristle brush (\$15). After that, ongoing costs drop to the consumables.

Professional Annual Maintenance Costs

Hiring out the same tasks in Ottawa:

- **Spring power wash and cleaning**: \$150 to \$350
- **Crack repair** (professional hot-pour): \$150 to \$400
- **Sealcoating** (every 2 to 3 years, annualized): \$100 to \$175 per year
- **Snow removal contract** (seasonal): \$400 to \$800

- **Fall inspection and prep:** \$100 to \$200

Professional Total: \$900 to \$1,925 per year

The Real Comparison

DIY saves roughly \$600 to \$1,600 per year. Over a 10-year period, that's \$6,000 to \$16,000 in savings — real money for homeowners in any Ottawa neighbourhood.

But Here's the Catch

DIY maintenance requires 15 to 25 hours of your time per year across all seasons. That breaks down to roughly:

- Spring cleanup and pressure wash: 3 to 5 hours
- Summer crack filling and sealcoating: 4 to 6 hours
- Fall prep and edging: 2 to 3 hours
- Winter shovelling and de-icing: 6 to 12 hours (unless you hire ploughing separately)

If you value your time at \$30 per hour, DIY "costs" an additional \$450 to \$750 in labour — still cheaper than professional service, but the gap narrows.

Interlock Driveway Costs (Different Numbers)

Interlock maintenance costs more in both scenarios:

- **DIY annual cost:** \$200 to \$400 (polymeric sand is the big expense at \$25 to \$45 per bag, and you may need 3 to 5 bags)
- **Professional annual cost:** \$1,200 to \$2,500 (joint restoration and cleaning is labour-intensive)

The Hybrid Approach (What Most Ottawa Homeowners Do)

The smartest strategy combines both:

- **DIY:** Seasonal cleaning, crack filling, edge maintenance, de-icing, snow shovelling
- **Professional:** Sealcoating (better equipment and materials), any structural repairs, re-levelling

This hybrid approach typically costs \$400 to \$700 per year and gives you professional-quality results where it matters most while saving on routine tasks.

What Affects Your Costs

- **Driveway size:** A long suburban driveway in Barrhaven costs more to maintain than a short urban drive in Centretown

- **Material:** Concrete is lowest maintenance, asphalt is moderate, interlock is highest
- **Age:** Driveways over 15 years need more frequent and extensive maintenance
- **Tree cover:** Driveways shaded by trees hold moisture longer and deteriorate faster

Whether you go full DIY or want professional help for specific tasks, **Ottawa Driveways** can connect you with local contractors who offer both full-service maintenance packages and one-time repairs across every Ottawa neighbourhood.

Looking for experienced contractors? The Ottawa Construction Network connects Ottawa homeowners with qualified professionals:

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- Eastern Residential Solution
- Vanguard Environmental
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes

[View all contractors ?](#)

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Driveways. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any driveway or paving project. Information is current as of April 5, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawadriveways.com for the latest answers.