

MOSS/ALGAE GROWTH ON BRICKWORK

Moss or algae growth may appear as a green stain on brickwork and should not be confused with vanadium staining as, although it can at times look similar, vanadium salts are only present in buff burning fire-clays whilst algae can occur on any brick type. Being organic, algae requires certain conditions to survive and, given a suitable environment, will feed on the trace mineral salts present in bricks, blocks, concrete or wood etc.

It thrives in damp shady areas and is most commonly seen on sheltered elevations, particularly where vegetation or water are in fairly close proximity. Such growths do not survive in direct sunlight or dry conditions and therefore tend to be more of a problem in the winter and early spring, usually dying off in the summer months.

In certain conditions it may be seen that algae is present on unused bricks in packs, being caused by prolonged storage of the bricks within polythene wrapping in moist conditions. This is usually confined to the bottom outer layers and should not be considered as a reason for rejection as the growth will quickly fade when the brick is built into work and exposed to direct sunlight.

Where dampness is caused by broken or badly fitted down-pipes the problem is fairly easy to resolve. However, where climatic or topographical features are the cause, washing down using a fungicidal wall wash will kill off the growth. Many proprietary brands are available at the major D.I.Y. stores. A dilute solution of household bleach has also proved to be a cheap and effective fungicide.

These treatments may need to be repeated as and when the growth re-appears, but ensuring the brickwork is dry during application will allow the fungicide to be absorbed and prolong the residual action.

Further information including a list of various remedies is contained in the Building Research Establishment Digest 370.

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