Home Improvement Tips

The Cure For Concrete Confusion

(NAPSA)—Do-it-yourselfers often avoid projects using concrete simply because they don't know what characteristics to look for when purchasing a concrete mix.

The requirements of nearly any home-improvement project using concrete can be met by one of four concrete mixes: standard concrete, fiber-reinforced or crack-resistant concrete, high-early strength concrete, or fast-setting concrete. The key to selecting the appropriate concrete mix for a particular project depends on three components: concrete strength, cost and setting-and-curing time.

"Concrete mixes are designed with characteristics to meet the very specific demands of any concrete project whether it's repairing steps, building a wall or patching a sidewalk," said Dennis Winchester, executive vice president of QUIKRETE, the leading producer of packaged concrete. "Understanding the characteristics of each concrete mix is vital in the selection process."

Standard concrete mix is appropriate for many projects due to its industry standard 3,500 pounds per square inch (psi) and user-friendly qualities. While the mix does require 24 hours to cure, it is a very cost-efficient means to successfully handle both repair and do-it-yourself concrete projects.

High-early strength concrete, such as QUIKRETE 5000, accelerates set-up time and generates more heat than standard concrete mix, which allows for its use in cold temperatures. In addition, high-early strength concrete can be walked on in just 10 to 12 hours and cures at 5,000 psi, making the mix ideal for applications such as slabs, footings, steps, columns, walls and patios.

Fiber-reinforced concrete or crack-resistant concrete is a construction-grade mix that eliminates the need for wire mesh by

utilizing thousands of synthetic fibers for maximized resistance to shrinkage cracks, and impact damage and chipping. Slightly more expensive than standard concrete, fiber-reinforced concrete reaches 4,000 psi in 28 days, and is appropriate for projects that require a minimum thickness of two inches to ensure durability, crack resistance and impact strength.

Fast-setting concrete is a special blend of cements, sand and gravel that provide set-up in 20 to 40 minutes without any mixing and yields 4,000 psi in 28 days. Most commonly used to set posts for fences, mailboxes and lamps, fast-setting concrete is considered the most user-friendly mix on the market.

"In addition to knowing the characteristics of the four main types of concrete, consumers should be sure to select a concrete brand that meets all ASTM (The American Society for Testing and Materials) standards, as is the case with QUIKRETE, which manufacturers all its concrete at 4,000 psi or stronger," Winchester said.

For information about the characteristics of concrete mixes and which mix to use for what projects, visit www.quikrete.com or call the QUIKRETE Technology Center at 1-770-216-9580.