



# repairing or replacing exterior brickwork

Brick structures are known for their long-term durability and low maintenance requirements.

However, if brick damage occurs, it can worsen considerably over a very short period of time. For this reason, it is important to protect and repair damaged brickwork immediately. In most minor cases, exterior brick facing can often be repaired by a handy do-it-yourselfer. However, if there is serious structural damage or extensive damage throughout a larger area (e.g. four bricks or more), it is probably wise to get professional advice.

First, you need to identify the source of the problem in order to prevent further deterioration. Brick deterioration can occur for several reasons including excessive moisture, certain invasive plants, and even some insects. In more extreme cases, damage may have been caused by external impact (e.g. vehicle damage) or foundation shifting.

Normally, it is the mortar that is most likely to first suffer from wear. Occasionally, actual bricks deteriorate and must be replaced. In such situations, the most difficult task may be finding a replacement brick that is a good match for size, color and surface texture. If you aren't sure where to start, ask local brick workers or suppliers about yards specializing in old bricks.

## Step-by-Step Brick Repair

The typical solution for most damaged brickwork begins with removing damaged mortar. Use a cold chisel and a hammer or mallet, and be sure to wear heavy work gloves and protective eyewear. Next, carefully remove the damaged brick, then chip and/or brush away all debris and dust. Dampen all surrounding bricks, so they do not draw moisture from the new mortar. Using a professional-grade mortar mix that matches the old mortar (with added pigment if required) and following the package instructions, apply an adequate coat of fresh mortar on the sides and bottom of the clean brick cavity. Add a thin layer of mortar to the sides and bottom of the replacement brick, and add a more substantial amount on the top before sliding the brick into place. Once your new brick is in position, pack extra mortar between the bricks, then remove the excess. In order to reduce the potential for unwanted abrasion or unnecessary wear, smooth the brick joints with a "jointer" tool to create a slightly concave profile between bricks. Try to match the existing mortar profile.

## A Clean Finish

Clean the work area thoroughly, including your brick wall and your tools, before the leftover mortar hardens. Do not wash dried mortar or mortar mixture down a drain. Use a wet sponge or rag to keep the mortar damp for about four days, to enhance curing and prevent crumbling.