

## Expansion Joint Filler Options

Ask your local home repair know-it-all, and there are two ways to fix those gaping spaces in your driveway where wood used to be. He or she will tell you that the space now inhabited by weeds, the composted remains of the lumber, or perhaps nothing at all, can be filled with yet more lumber, or a gooey substance that comes in a tube.

Until recently, that local know-it-all would have been correct. In the last few seasons, however, several Houston-area businesses have emerged with products designed to fill these spaces, and they add some flair to boot.

The products have some differences, but what they have in common is that they are flexible, long rubber-like strips that press into the empty areas between your concrete slabs. They come in several colors, and they will absolutely make a dramatic difference in the look of your driveway, which for many of us is a significant portion of the front yard. It doesn't stop with curb appeal; these products can actually protect your driveway from cracking and needing to be replaced, which is a costly proposition.

The two Houston-area companies are Slab Gasket (producer of, you guessed it: Slab Gasket), on the west side, and the R&D Workshop, which produces Trim-A-Slab, on the gulf freeway. The products offered vary enough to suit just about every driveway situation you may have, so here are the details.

Slab Gasket comes in grey and almond, and in a variety of widths. While it is the more expensive option, if you must have almond or you have very wide gaps, Slab Gasket may be the best choice. Slab Gasket is also good for driveways that have been surfaced with decorative rock, as the slab edges are typically rather sharp, and Slab Gasket can be installed at or slightly below the surface in these conditions. Some things to note about Slab Gasket, however, is that it is more difficult to install, and works best when the gaps are prepared by filling them to a specific depth with sand. This is because the filler sits within the gap, and without the support below, it can migrate farther down over time, giving it a wavy look.

Trim-A-Slab is the DIY product of choice, as it can be installed with less preparation, with little skill involved. This is an easy 'honey-do' box to check, or even a project for the gardener in the family. Trim-A-Slab comes in black or grey, and in only one size. The most common size gaps found in driveways and sidewalks is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch wide, and Trim-A-Slab fits this plus or minus about an eighth of an inch. To avoid the gap preparation, Trim-A-Slab takes advantage of the rounded edges found on most slabs, and it is supported by these edges to keep it from migrating farther into the gap.

In summary, if you have rounded edge slabs, with less than one inch gaps, you can take advantage of Trim-A-Slab at about half the cost of Slab Gasket. If you have over one inch gaps, sharp-edged slabs, or must have the almond color, Slab-Gasket will be your choice. Either way, your driveway will be transformed, and may start to live up to the car your park on it!