

OTTAWA PATIOS

Patio Maintenance

Sealing, cleaning, winter preparation, repairs and
seasonal upkeep

19 Expert Answers from Patio IQ

ottawapatios.com/construction-brain

Table of Contents

1. How often should Ottawa pavers be resanded?
2. How do I keep squirrels from digging up sand between my Ottawa patio pavers?
3. How do I keep my Ottawa patio looking new year after year?
4. What spring maintenance should I do on my Ottawa deck?
5. How do I repair a retaining wall that is leaning in Ottawa?
6. How do I store patio furniture during Ottawa's winter?
7. What is the best deck stain or sealant for Ottawa weather?
8. How often does a composite deck need maintenance in Ottawa's climate?
9. How do I remove moss and algae from my Ottawa patio?
10. How do I prevent ice buildup on my Ottawa patio steps?
11. How often should I reapply polymeric sand on my Ottawa patio?
12. What is the best salt alternative for an Ottawa patio in winter?
13. How do I repair cracked natural stone on my Ottawa patio?
14. Should I power wash my Ottawa stone patio?
15. How do I remove efflorescence from my Ottawa patio pavers?
16. What is the best way to clean patio pavers in Ottawa after winter?
17. How do I prepare my Ottawa patio for winter?
18. When should I reseal my paver patio in Ottawa?
19. How do I fix sunken or uneven pavers on my Ottawa patio?

Q1

How often should Ottawa pavers be resanded?

Polymeric sand in an Ottawa paver patio typically needs to be refreshed every **3 to 5 years**, though the actual timeline depends heavily on your specific conditions. Patios exposed to heavy rainfall, aggressive snowmelt runoff, or high foot traffic will need attention on the shorter end of that range.

Ottawa's climate makes this maintenance task more critical than it would be in milder parts of Canada. The city's 50-plus freeze-thaw cycles per winter, combined with significant spring snowmelt and summer thunderstorms, are relentless at eroding joint material. Regular sand washes out within a single season in Ottawa — which is exactly why polymeric sand is non-negotiable here in the first place. Even quality polymeric sand gradually breaks down as the polymer binders degrade from UV exposure and repeated freeze-thaw stress.

The signs that your patio needs resanding are fairly easy to spot. If you can see visible gaps or voids in the joints, if weeds are sprouting through, if ants have started building colonies beneath the pavers, or if the joint material crumbles when you press it, it is time to resand. Do not wait until the joints are completely empty — once pavers start shifting from lack of lateral support, you may be looking at relevelling work on top of resanding.

The process itself is manageable as a DIY project for most homeowners. Start by thoroughly cleaning the patio surface with a pressure washer to remove debris, moss, and old sand remnants — let it dry completely for at least 24 to 48 hours before applying new polymeric sand. Pour the sand over the surface, sweep it into the joints with a push broom, and repeat until the joints are filled to within about 3 millimetres of the paver surface. Compact lightly with a plate compactor if you have access to one, then activate the polymers by misting the entire surface with water according to the manufacturer's instructions. Avoid doing this in direct hot sun or when rain is forecast within 24 hours.

One important caution specific to Ottawa: if your patio sits on Leda clay and you are noticing significant joint erosion alongside uneven or rocking pavers, resanding alone will not solve the problem. Clay movement can undermine the granular base over time, and persistent shifting pavers may indicate a drainage or base issue that needs professional assessment before you invest in new sand.

Applying a quality paver sealer after resanding — roughly every 3 to 4 years — also helps extend the life of the polymeric sand by protecting the surface from UV degradation and reducing water penetration into the joints.

Q2

How do I keep squirrels from digging up sand between my Ottawa patio pavers?

Squirrels digging up paver joints is genuinely one of the most frustrating patio maintenance issues Ottawa homeowners deal with, and the fix is simpler than most people expect. The real solution is switching from regular sand to **polymeric sand** in your joints — this is the single most effective thing you can do.

Regular sand is essentially an open invitation for squirrels, chipmunks, and ants. It stays loose, it smells like soil, and it's easy to dig through. Polymeric sand contains polymer binders that, when activated with water, harden the joint into a firm, almost rubbery compound that animals have no interest in disturbing. Once it cures, there's nothing loose to dig into and no soil-like scent to attract them.

Re-sanding your paver joints with polymeric sand is a straightforward DIY project for most homeowners. Start by removing as much of the old sand as possible using a stiff brush, a leaf blower, or a gentle pass with a pressure washer — just be careful not to erode the base underneath. Let everything dry completely, then sweep the polymeric sand across the surface and work it into the joints using a push broom. Compact it lightly with a plate compactor or hand tamper if you have one, then blow off the excess from the paver faces before misting the surface with water to activate the polymers. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on drying time — typically 24 hours before foot traffic.

One Ottawa-specific note worth mentioning: our heavy spring melt and frequent rain can wash out regular sand surprisingly fast, which is why so many Ottawa patios end up with hollow, crumbling joints within a season or two. The freeze-thaw cycle also works loose joints wider over time, making them even easier for wildlife to excavate. Polymeric sand handles both problems well.

As a maintenance habit, inspect your joints each spring after the snow melts. Ottawa's 50-plus freeze-thaw cycles every winter will gradually break down even good polymeric sand over three to five years, so periodic re-application is normal and expected. Catching it early — before squirrels discover the loose spots — saves you from a more extensive re-sanding job later.

This is genuinely one of the few patio maintenance tasks that's well within DIY territory. A bag of quality polymeric sand runs roughly **\$30 to \$50** at local Ottawa home improvement stores, and a standard patio typically needs two to four bags depending on joint width and square footage.

Q3

How do I keep my Ottawa patio looking new year after year?

Keeping an Ottawa patio looking fresh and new is an ongoing commitment that accounts for the reality of our climate — and it is absolutely achievable with the right routine. The key is understanding that maintenance in

Ottawa is not the same as maintenance in Vancouver or even Toronto. Our patios endure a wider temperature range, heavier snow loads, more freeze-thaw damage, and a shorter usable season, which means every maintenance task has a timing component tied to our specific weather patterns.

Establish a seasonal maintenance calendar built around Ottawa's climate cycle. In spring (late April to mid-May), conduct a thorough cleaning and inspection as soon as the snow melts and temperatures stabilize above 5°C. Remove all winter debris, sweep sand and salt residue off the surface, and wash with an appropriate cleaner for your material. For pavers and natural stone, check for any frost heaving — individual stones that have shifted or risen — and reset them before the surrounding joints pack with dirt and lock them in the wrong position.

In summer (June through August), the main enemies are organic staining and UV fading. Clean spills from barbecue grease, fallen berries, and leaf tannins promptly — these stains set into porous surfaces within days during Ottawa's warm, humid summers. For natural stone patios, blot rather than wipe grease spills to prevent spreading the stain into the pores. A monthly light sweep and rinse with a garden hose keeps surface grime from building up.

In fall (September to October), do a final thorough cleaning before winter. This is also the ideal time to apply or refresh sealant on concrete pavers, stamped concrete, or natural stone. Sealing creates a barrier against the salt, sand, and moisture onslaught of Ottawa's winter. Apply sealer when daytime temperatures are between 10°C and 25°C with no rain expected for 24 to 48 hours — usually a window in late September or early October works well. Remove all leaves and organic debris before the first snowfall, as trapped wet leaves under snow create dark stains and encourage mould growth.

Winter care (November through March) focuses on damage prevention. Use plastic shovels rather than metal on paver and stone surfaces. Avoid de-icing products containing magnesium chloride or ammonium sulfate on concrete pavers, as these chemicals accelerate surface scaling. Calcium chloride is generally safer, though sand or kitty litter for traction is the least damaging option. Never pile snow on one section of the patio if you can spread it — concentrated snow loads can cause localized settling in the base underneath.

Every two to three years, invest in a deeper maintenance cycle. For paver patios, this means removing and replacing the polymeric sand in the joints. Old polymeric sand breaks down from UV exposure and freeze-thaw cycling, losing its binding properties and allowing weeds, ants, and moisture into the joint system. Power-wash the joints clean, let them dry thoroughly, and apply fresh polymeric sand. This single step does more to keep a paver patio looking new than almost anything else.

For stamped concrete patios, resealing every two to three years maintains the colour and gloss while protecting against the surface scaling that Ottawa's freeze-thaw conditions cause on exposed concrete. If scaling has already begun, a professional can apply a resurfacing overlay to restore the appearance before resealing.

Consistent care across all four seasons keeps your patio looking its best and prevents the gradual deterioration that leads to costly repairs. If your patio needs professional restoration or you want expert guidance on a maintenance plan tailored to your specific materials, browse the Ottawa Patios directory to find local patio professionals in your area.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Xata Remodeling Art Design
- The Next Reno
- Ottawa Caulking

[View all contractors ?](#)

What spring maintenance should I do on my Ottawa deck?

Spring deck maintenance in Ottawa is not optional — it is the single most important thing you can do to extend the life of your outdoor living space. After five months buried under snow, soaked by freeze-thaw cycles, and subjected to temperatures that swing from -30°C to above freezing repeatedly, your deck has endured conditions that would be considered extreme anywhere in the country. A thorough spring inspection and maintenance routine catches problems early, before they become expensive structural repairs.

Start with a complete visual inspection once the snow has fully melted, typically late April in Ottawa. Walk the entire deck surface and look for boards that have heaved, warped, cracked, or developed soft spots. Press a screwdriver into any discoloured or suspect areas — if it sinks easily, the wood has begun to rot and that board needs replacement. Pay special attention to areas where snow sat longest, usually against the house wall and in shaded corners, as prolonged moisture contact accelerates decay.

Check the ledger board where your deck attaches to the house. This is the most failure-prone connection point on any Ottawa deck because it traps moisture between the deck structure and the house wall. Look for gaps, rust stains from corroding fasteners, or soft wood around the lag bolts. A failing ledger board is a safety hazard — deck collapses from ledger failure cause serious injuries every year across Ontario. If you see any signs of deterioration, have it assessed immediately.

Inspect the substructure: joists, beams, and posts. Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycling is brutal on structural connections. Check that joist hangers are still firmly attached, that no fasteners have backed out, and that posts have not shifted or heaved. Metal connectors exposed to winter salt spray (common on decks near driveways or sidewalks) may show corrosion. Replace any connector that has lost more than a third of its cross-section to rust.

Check the footings. Post footings in Ottawa must extend below the frost line — 1.2 to 1.5 metres — to resist heaving. If your posts sit on shallow footings or concrete pads on grade, winter frost may have pushed them upward, creating a visible lean or gap. Measure from the deck surface to the ground at multiple points and compare to previous years if you have records.

Once the inspection is complete, clean the entire deck surface. Sweep off all debris, leaves, and the sand and grit that accumulates from winter foot traffic and spring runoff. Then wash the deck with a deck cleaner formulated for your material — wood, composite, or PVC each have specific products. A pressure washer at 1,200 to 1,500 PSI with a fan tip works well for wood decks, but keep it below 1,000 PSI for composites and softwoods to avoid surface damage.

After cleaning and allowing two to three dry days, assess whether your stain or sealer needs refreshing. Pour a small amount of water on the deck surface — if it beads up, your finish is still working. If it soaks in within a few seconds, it is time to reapply. In Ottawa, most penetrating stains need refreshing every two to three years due to our intense UV and moisture exposure.

Completing this maintenance by mid-May puts your deck in the best position for the full outdoor season ahead. If your spring inspection reveals structural concerns or widespread board damage, connecting with a deck specialist through the Ottawa Patios directory early in the season ensures you get on the schedule before the summer rush.

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

- Homeupgraders
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Marcduboiservices
- Joe Imerti Contracting
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q5

How do I repair a retaining wall that is leaning in Ottawa?

A leaning retaining wall in Ottawa is a serious structural concern that demands prompt attention. Our climate is exceptionally hard on retaining walls — the frost line extends 1.2 to 1.5 metres deep, winter temperatures plunge to -30°C, and the repeated freeze-thaw cycling that defines Ottawa springs and falls generates enormous lateral pressure against any structure holding back soil. A wall that has started leaning is telling you that the forces behind it have exceeded its design capacity, and the lean will only worsen with each passing freeze-thaw season.

Before attempting any repair, you need to understand why the wall is failing. The most common causes in Ottawa are inadequate drainage behind the wall, insufficient base depth for our frost conditions, undersized wall construction relative to the retained height, and hydrostatic pressure from water-saturated clay soils — which are extremely common in neighbourhoods built on the Champlain Sea clay deposits found across much of Ottawa's urban area, particularly in areas like Kanata, Barrhaven, and Orleans.

For walls leaning less than two inches and under three feet in total height, a DIY repair may be feasible. Start by excavating behind the wall to expose the back face and relieve soil pressure. Install or improve drainage by laying perforated weeping tile at the base of the wall, wrapped in filter fabric, draining to daylight or a catch basin. Backfill with clear crushed stone (three-quarter inch or larger) rather than the clay soil you removed — this drainage layer prevents the hydrostatic pressure buildup that likely caused the lean in the first place.

For interlocking block walls, you can carefully disassemble the leaning section from the top down, re-level the base course, and rebuild with proper setback on each course (typically a half-inch per course for most block systems). Ensure the base course sits on a compacted granular pad at least six inches deep — deeper for walls over two feet in Ottawa's frost-prone ground. Adding geogrid reinforcement layers every two to three courses dramatically increases wall stability, especially for walls retaining Ottawa's heavy clay soils.

Walls over three feet that are leaning, or any wall showing significant cracking or bulging, should be evaluated by a professional before repair is attempted. The engineering loads involved increase exponentially with wall height, and a collapse during DIY repair can be dangerous. In Ottawa, retaining walls over one metre (roughly 3.3 feet) in height generally require an engineer's design and a building permit from the City of Ottawa.

Poured concrete or stone retaining walls that are leaning present different challenges than interlocking block. These monolithic structures cannot be easily disassembled and rebuilt. Repair options include installing helical tiebacks or deadman anchors to pull the wall back toward plumb, or building a reinforcing wall against the front face. Both approaches are professional-level work requiring specialized equipment.

Timing matters for retaining wall repair in Ottawa. The best window is June through September when the ground is fully thawed, dry conditions are more likely, and you have time for the repair to settle before the next freeze cycle begins. Starting a retaining wall repair in October is risky — if an early freeze hits before backfill is properly compacted and drainage is functioning, you could end up worse than where you started.

If your retaining wall is showing signs of movement, the Ottawa Patios directory includes contractors experienced with retaining wall repair and construction in our challenging soil and climate conditions.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Xata Remodeling Art Design
- The Next Reno

- Speedy Pete's Inc

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q6

How do I store patio furniture during Ottawa's winter?

Proper winter storage is essential for protecting your patio furniture investment through Ottawa's five-plus months of harsh conditions. From November through April, your outdoor pieces face sustained temperatures below -20°C, heavy snow loads, ice accumulation, freeze-thaw moisture cycling, and road salt carried by wind from nearby streets. Furniture left exposed without protection will deteriorate far faster than the same pieces in a milder climate.

The ideal storage location is indoors — a garage, basement, or shed where furniture stays dry and above freezing. If you have the space, this is always the best option. Before moving anything inside, clean each piece thoroughly. Wash with warm soapy water, rinse completely, and let everything dry for at least a full day. Storing damp furniture in an enclosed space leads to mould and mildew growth over the winter months, which can be worse than the weather damage you are trying to prevent.

For metal furniture — aluminum, wrought iron, or steel — apply a light coat of car wax or a metal-specific protectant before storage. Ottawa's winter humidity, even indoors, can trigger oxidation on exposed metal surfaces. Check for any scratches or chips in the finish and touch them up with matching spray paint, as bare metal will rust quickly once spring moisture arrives. Wrought iron is particularly vulnerable and should always be stored indoors if possible.

Wicker and rattan furniture, whether natural or synthetic, should never be left outdoors through an Ottawa winter. Natural wicker will crack and split as moisture penetrates the fibres and freezes. Even synthetic resin wicker becomes brittle at sustained low temperatures and can crack under snow load. Store these pieces in a heated or at least insulated space.

Wooden furniture — teak, cedar, or pressure-treated pine — is more resilient but still benefits from indoor storage. If you must leave wood pieces outside, elevate them off the ground on blocks to prevent moisture wicking from pooling snowmelt, and cover them with breathable furniture covers. Avoid plastic tarps, as they trap condensation underneath and accelerate wood rot. Teak specifically should be treated with teak oil before storage to prevent the deep drying that Ottawa's cold, low-humidity winter air causes.

Cushions and fabric elements absolutely must come inside. Store them in a dry location, ideally in breathable storage bags rather than sealed plastic bins. Ottawa basements can be humid, so adding silica gel packets or a

small dehumidifier nearby prevents mould on stored fabrics. Clean and fully dry all cushions before packing them away — any residual moisture will turn into mildew by spring.

For homeowners who lack indoor storage space, high-quality outdoor furniture covers rated for Canadian winters are the next best option. Look for covers with reinforced seams, adjustable drawstrings, and ventilation panels. Secure them firmly — Ottawa's winter wind gusts regularly exceed 60 kilometres per hour and will shred or blow away loose covers. Weighting the cover edges with sandbags or bungee-cording them to the furniture legs helps.

Bring your furniture out again only after the last frost risk has passed, typically mid-May in Ottawa. Unpacking too early means exposing freshly stored pieces to late-season freeze-thaw and spring ice storms that can undo all your careful preparation.

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

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- Elie The Carpet Guy Inc.
- 613 Interlock
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes

[View all contractors ?](#)

What is the best deck stain or sealant for Ottawa weather?

Choosing a deck stain or sealant for Ottawa means selecting a product that can handle one of the most punishing climates in southern Canada. Your deck faces winter lows near -30°C, summer highs above 35°C, over 220 centimetres of snow, intense spring UV as the sun angle climbs, and 50 or more freeze-thaw cycles that work moisture into every crack and grain of exposed wood. The wrong product will peel, crack, or fade within a single season.

For pressure-treated lumber decks, which remain the most common type in Ottawa, a penetrating semi-transparent stain offers the best balance of protection and longevity. Penetrating stains soak into the wood fibres rather than forming a film on the surface. This distinction is critical in Ottawa because film-forming products — solid stains and many sealers — trap moisture beneath the coating. When that trapped moisture freezes, it expands and lifts the finish, leading to peeling and flaking that looks terrible by the following spring. Penetrating stains allow the wood to breathe while still providing UV and water protection.

Oil-based penetrating stains have traditionally been the gold standard for Ottawa conditions. They absorb deeply into wood grain, flex with seasonal expansion and contraction, and resist the cracking that freeze-thaw cycles cause in rigid coatings. Brands with a strong track record in cold-climate applications include Sikkens, Penofin, and Armstrong-Clark. These products typically need reapplication every two to three years in Ottawa's climate, compared to four or five years in milder regions.

Water-based stains have improved significantly and now offer competitive performance with easier cleanup and lower VOC emissions. The best water-based options for Ottawa use alkyd-modified or hybrid formulations that penetrate well while maintaining flexibility. Look for products specifically rated for freeze-thaw resistance and UV protection — generic "all-weather" claims are not sufficient for our conditions.

For cedar decks, which are popular in Ottawa's older neighbourhoods like the Glebe, Westboro, and Rockcliffe, a semi-transparent stain that contains UV inhibitors is essential. Cedar's natural oils provide some moisture resistance, but without UV protection the wood turns grey within one Ottawa summer. A tinted penetrating oil designed for cedar preserves the warm colour while letting the grain show through.

Timing your application is just as important as product selection. The ideal window in Ottawa is late May through mid-June or September through early October — when daytime temperatures are consistently between 10°C and 30°C and rain is not expected for 48 hours. The wood surface temperature should not exceed 32°C, which rules out staining in direct July afternoon sun. New pressure-treated lumber needs to weather for several weeks before staining to allow the treatment chemicals to leach out and the pores to open up — if your deck was built in spring, early fall of the same year is often the right timing.

Always prep the surface properly before staining. A deck cleaner or brightener followed by light pressure washing (under 1,500 PSI for softwoods) removes grey fibres, mildew, and old finish residue. Applying stain over a dirty or previously coated surface is the number one reason finishes fail prematurely. If you are unsure which product suits your deck's wood species and condition, an Ottawa deck professional from our contractor directory can recommend the right approach for your specific situation.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- The Next Reno
- Floor-2-Wall Inc
- The Fixer

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q8

How often does a composite deck need maintenance in Ottawa's climate?

Composite decking is marketed as low-maintenance, and compared to pressure-treated lumber it certainly requires less work. But "low maintenance" does not mean "no maintenance," and Ottawa's climate is particularly demanding on any outdoor surface. The combination of heavy snow loads through winter, intense UV exposure during our surprisingly strong summer sun, and 50-plus freeze-thaw cycles annually means that composite decks here need more attention than the same product installed in a milder climate.

The most important maintenance task is regular cleaning, which should happen at least twice per year — once in spring after the snow melts and once in fall before winter sets in. Spring cleaning removes the grit, salt residue, and organic debris that accumulate under snow cover all winter. Ottawa homeowners commonly use calcium chloride or rock salt on walkways, and tracked salt residue can stain and degrade composite boards if left sitting through the spring thaw period. A thorough wash with warm soapy water and a soft-bristle brush handles most surface dirt. For tougher stains, composite-specific cleaners are available at most Ottawa building supply stores.

Mould and mildew are the main enemies of composite decking in our region. Ottawa's humid summers, particularly July and August when humidity regularly exceeds 70 percent, create ideal conditions for mould growth in shaded

areas and between boards where airflow is limited. Inspect your deck monthly during summer and address any dark spots promptly with an oxygen bleach solution or a commercial composite deck cleaner. Catching mould early prevents it from penetrating the board surface where it becomes much harder to remove.

Snow removal technique matters significantly for composite decks in Ottawa. Use a plastic shovel rather than metal, and shovel with the grain of the boards to avoid scratching. Never use ice chippers or metal scrapers. For ice buildup, calcium chloride is generally safe for most composite brands, but check your manufacturer's warranty terms — some brands void coverage if certain de-icers are used. Spreading kitty litter or sand for traction is a safer alternative.

Inspect the structural components underneath your composite deck boards every spring. The joists, ledger board, and fasteners are typically pressure-treated wood or metal, and these are subject to Ottawa's freeze-thaw damage just like any other outdoor structure. Look for signs of rot, corrosion, loose fasteners, or joist movement. The boards themselves may look fine while the substructure deteriorates underneath.

Most composite manufacturers recommend avoiding rubber-backed mats or planters placed directly on the deck surface, as these trap moisture and can cause discolouration or mould growth underneath — a problem amplified by Ottawa's long winters when items sit under snow for months.

With consistent seasonal cleaning and annual inspections, a quality composite deck in Ottawa should maintain its appearance for 15 to 25 years. If your deck is showing premature wear, fading, or structural concerns, the Ottawa Patios directory connects you with local deck professionals who understand how our climate affects these materials.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- JC Carpentry
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
- Speedy Pete's Inc
- Humble Homes - property maintenance

[View all contractors ?](#)

How do I remove moss and algae from my Ottawa patio?

Moss and algae thrive on Ottawa patios because our climate gives them exactly what they need — long periods of moisture from spring snowmelt, summer humidity, and fall rains, combined with shaded areas where surfaces stay damp for days at a time. North-facing patios and those shaded by mature trees are particularly prone, and you will often see the first green patches appear in April as snow recedes and temperatures hover near freezing.

Before reaching for chemicals, start with mechanical removal. A stiff-bristled push broom or a dedicated patio scrub brush will dislodge most surface moss and algae from concrete pavers, natural stone, and stamped concrete. For textured surfaces where growth has taken hold in crevices, a pressure washer set between 1,500 and 2,000 PSI works well. Keep the nozzle at least 12 inches from the surface and use a fan tip rather than a zero-degree tip to avoid etching pavers or dislodging joint sand.

For stubborn growth, a cleaning solution of one part white vinegar to one part water is effective and safe for most patio materials. Apply it generously, let it sit for 15 to 20 minutes, then scrub and rinse. Oxygen bleach (sodium percarbonate) is another excellent option — it kills moss and algae without harming nearby garden plants the way chlorine bleach can. Mix it according to the package directions, apply with a pump sprayer, wait 10 to 15 minutes, and scrub with a brush before rinsing thoroughly.

Avoid chlorine bleach on coloured concrete pavers or natural stone, as it can cause discolouration and degrade the surface over time. It can also kill surrounding grass and garden plants if runoff reaches your beds — a real concern on Ottawa properties where patios often sit adjacent to perennial gardens.

Once the patio is clean, address the conditions that encourage regrowth. Trim overhanging branches to increase sunlight and airflow across the surface. Ensure that downspouts and grading direct water away from the patio rather than pooling on it. Check that your paver joints are properly filled with polymeric sand, as empty or eroded joints trap moisture and give moss a foothold.

Applying a paver sealer after cleaning creates a protective barrier that makes future moss and algae removal much easier. Sealers also help protect against the salt and sand damage that Ottawa patios endure each winter. The best time to seal is late spring or early fall when temperatures are consistently above 10°C and rain is not expected for 24 hours — typically late May or September in Ottawa.

For patios with persistent moss problems that return every spring despite cleaning, the underlying issue may be poor drainage or insufficient base slope. An Ottawa patio specialist listed in our contractor directory can assess whether regrading or drainage improvements would solve the problem permanently.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Ottawa Caulking
- The Granite shop
- Floor-2-Wall Inc

[View all contractors ?](#)

How do I prevent ice buildup on my Ottawa patio steps?

Patio steps are the highest-risk area for ice buildup on any Ottawa property. They collect and concentrate water from the patio surface, melt-refreeze at a faster rate than flat areas because of their exposure, and any ice on steps creates an immediate fall hazard. With Ottawa winters lasting five months and temperatures cycling above and below zero over 50 times per season, managing ice on patio steps requires both proactive design and reactive maintenance strategies.

The most effective long-term prevention is proper drainage at the design and construction stage. Every patio step should have a slight forward pitch — about 2% or roughly 3 mm over a standard 300 mm tread depth — so that water naturally drains off the front edge rather than pooling on the surface. If your existing steps are level or pitched slightly backward (toward the riser), water collects on the tread, freezes, and builds into a layer of ice that is extremely difficult to manage all winter. Correcting the pitch on existing steps may require lifting and resetting the tread pavers or stones, but it solves the root cause permanently.

Drip edge management is another critical factor. Look at where water comes from above your steps. If your patio surface drains toward the top step, a channel drain or slight grade adjustment at the top landing can redirect that water before it cascades down the steps. Similarly, if a roof drip line, downspout, or eaves trough overflow hits near the steps, that concentrated water flow creates ice far faster than general precipitation.

For ongoing winter maintenance, apply a patio-safe de-icer to the steps proactively before freezing rain or temperature drops — do not wait until ice has already formed. Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) or magnesium chloride are the best options for paver and natural stone steps. Apply sparingly along the tread surface and the front edge of each step. Avoid rock salt, which damages the surface and becomes ineffective below -12°C when Ottawa needs it most.

Non-slip tread mats designed for outdoor steps are a practical addition, especially for frequently used patio entrances. Look for rubber or heavy-duty outdoor mats with drainage holes that prevent water from pooling underneath them. Secure them with adhesive strips or pins so they do not shift under foot traffic. These provide traction even when some ice is present and can be removed in spring.

For heated solutions, electric snow-melting mats or cables installed under or on top of step surfaces are effective but require outdoor electrical access. In-pavement heating systems are the premium solution — heat cables embedded in the setting bed beneath the pavers keep the surface above freezing during precipitation events. The operating cost is moderate for the small area of a stairway compared to an entire patio, and they eliminate ice entirely when active.

A simple but often overlooked prevention method is keeping the steps clear of snow promptly after each snowfall. Snow that sits on steps compacts under foot traffic, partially melts, and refreezes into hard ice that is much harder to remove than fresh snow. Use a plastic-edged shovel and clear steps down to the surface after every accumulation. Ottawa patio specialists can evaluate your specific step configuration and recommend whether drainage correction, de-icing products, or a heated system is the most practical approach for your layout.

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

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- M.O.T. CONSTRUCTION INC.
- Stone and fern
- Nic's D.U.C.T Works Inc

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q11

How often should I reapply polymeric sand on my Ottawa patio?

In Ottawa's climate, polymeric sand typically needs full reapplication every 3-5 years, with spot repairs to high-wear or problem areas every 1-2 years. That is a general range — the actual frequency depends on the quality of the polymeric sand used, how well it was initially installed, your drainage conditions, and how much winter abuse the patio takes each year.

Ottawa is one of the harder environments in Canada for polymeric sand longevity. Over 50 freeze-thaw cycles per season work the sand loose from below as the base expands and contracts. Snow shovelling — especially with metal-edged shovels — scrapes sand out of the joints from above. De-icers can break down the polymer binder. And 220+ cm of snow means months of moisture sitting on the surface, slowly degrading the bond. All of these factors shorten polymeric sand life compared to what manufacturers might claim based on testing in milder climates.

The best way to determine if your polymeric sand needs attention is a simple visual and physical check each spring. Walk the entire patio and look at the joint levels. Polymeric sand should fill the joint to just below the chamfer (bevelled edge) of the paver. If it has dropped more than 3-4 mm below the chamfer in any area, that

section needs topping up. If you can push a screwdriver into the joint and the sand crumbles rather than resisting, the polymer binder has failed and the sand is no longer doing its job.

For spot repairs — isolated areas where sand has washed out, eroded, or been scraped away — you can add new polymeric sand on top of existing sand as long as the existing base is still firm and bonded. Clean any debris, weeds, or loose material out of the affected joints, pour in new sand, sweep it into the joints, blow excess off the paver faces, and activate with a fine water mist. The paver surface must be completely dry when you apply the sand, and you need at least 24 hours of dry weather above 0°C for proper curing.

For full reapplication across the entire patio, the process is more involved. Ideally, you would remove as much of the old degraded sand as possible using a pressure washer at moderate PSI to flush it out of the joints. Let everything dry for 2-3 days, then apply the new polymeric sand into clean, empty joints. This gives the best results because fresh polymeric sand bonds much better to clean joint walls than to a layer of partially failed old sand.

Product quality matters significantly. Budget polymeric sand from big box stores tends to use weaker polymer binders that break down faster under Ottawa conditions. Professional-grade products from manufacturers like Techniseal, Alliance, or SEK-Surebond use higher polymer content and better binder chemistry that resists freeze-thaw cycling and moisture degradation. The price difference is modest compared to the labour of reapplication, so the premium product is almost always the better investment.

If you find yourself reapplying polymeric sand more frequently than every 2-3 years, there may be an underlying issue — excessive water flow through the joints, poor base drainage, or a patio grade that channels water into concentrated areas rather than sheeting it evenly. Ottawa patio contractors can assess whether your joint sand failure is a product issue, an installation issue, or a drainage issue that needs a different solution entirely.

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

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes
- Dreamwood Construction & Renovations
- Eastern Residential Solution

[View all contractors ?](#)

What is the best salt alternative for an Ottawa patio in winter?

Standard rock salt (sodium chloride) is the worst de-icer you can use on a patio in Ottawa. It is cheap and widely available, which is why so many homeowners reach for it, but it is destructive to concrete pavers, natural stone, polymeric sand joints, and the vegetation surrounding your patio. At temperatures below -12°C — which Ottawa experiences regularly from December through February — rock salt also stops working entirely, making it both damaging and ineffective for much of our winter.

The best overall salt alternative for Ottawa patios is calcium magnesium acetate (CMA). It is non-corrosive, safe for concrete and natural stone surfaces, biodegradable, and does not damage vegetation or contaminate soil. It works by preventing ice from bonding to the surface rather than melting through it, which means it is most effective when applied before a freezing event rather than after. The drawback is cost — CMA is significantly more expensive than traditional salt — but for a patio surface you have invested in, the protection is worth it.

Calcium chloride is another effective option that works down to -30°C , covering even Ottawa's coldest nights. It melts ice quickly and requires less product per application than rock salt. However, it can be moderately damaging to concrete pavers over time and may leave an oily residue on surfaces. If you use calcium chloride, sweep away the residual slush and product after it has done its work rather than leaving it to sit on the paver surface.

Magnesium chloride works well down to about -15°C and is gentler on concrete and stone than calcium chloride or rock salt. It is available in pellet and liquid form and is a good middle-ground option — more affordable than CMA and less damaging than rock salt. For most Ottawa patios, magnesium chloride offers the best balance of performance, price, and surface protection for typical winter conditions.

For a completely non-chemical approach, coarse sand or fine gravel provides traction without any de-icing at all. This is the safest option for natural stone patios where you want zero chemical risk. The trade-off is that it does not melt ice — it only provides grip on top of it — and you will need to sweep up the grit in spring.

There are also several products marketed specifically as "patio-safe" or "paver-safe" de-icers. Read the ingredients rather than relying on the marketing. If the primary ingredient is sodium chloride with a small amount of CMA or magnesium chloride blended in, it is still mostly rock salt and will still cause damage over time.

Regardless of which product you use, apply it sparingly. More is not better — excess de-icer increases the number of freeze-thaw cycles the paver surface experiences, which is the primary mechanism that causes spalling and surface erosion. Apply just enough to break the ice bond, then shovel or scrape the loosened ice away. Ottawa patio professionals can recommend the right de-icing approach based on your specific paver material, because what works safely on dense granite would be too aggressive for porous limestone.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Upgrade Renos and Landscaping
- Xata Remodeling Art Design
- Alain Renovations

[View all contractors ?](#)

How do I repair cracked natural stone on my Ottawa patio?

Cracked natural stone on an Ottawa patio is a common problem, and our climate is the primary driver. With winter temperatures dropping to -30°C and over 50 freeze-thaw cycles per season, water that seeps into the natural pores and micro-fissures of stone expands as it freezes, gradually widening hairline cracks into visible fractures.

Limestone and sandstone are particularly vulnerable, while granite and quartzite resist cracking much better due to their density.

The repair approach depends entirely on the type of crack and whether the stone is structurally compromised or just cosmetically damaged. For hairline cracks that have not fully separated the stone, an exterior-rated stone epoxy or polyurethane adhesive can stabilize the crack and prevent further water infiltration. Clean the crack thoroughly — remove all dirt, organic matter, and loose particles using a wire brush or compressed air. The crack must be completely dry before filling, which in Ottawa means waiting for a stretch of dry weather in summer. Apply the adhesive into the crack, slightly overfill it, and scrape the excess flush with the surface using a putty knife. Colour-matched epoxies are available for most common stone types and can produce a nearly invisible repair.

For larger cracks where the stone has shifted or separated into two pieces, you have two options. If the pieces still fit together cleanly with minimal material loss, an exterior stone adhesive can rejoin them. Apply adhesive to both faces, press together firmly, and support or weight the joint for the full curing period specified on the product — usually 24-48 hours at temperatures above 10°C. If the stone has crumbled or pieces are missing, a clean repair is unlikely and replacement is the better path.

Replacing a single natural stone piece requires finding a match in material, thickness, colour, and finish. This can be challenging, especially for flagstone patios where each piece is unique. Salvage yards in the Ottawa area sometimes carry reclaimed stone, or you can take a sample piece to a stone supplier for the closest match. Remove the damaged stone, clean out the bedding material underneath, relevel the base, set the new stone on fresh bedding, and fill the joints to match the surrounding area.

For patios where cracking is widespread rather than isolated to one or two stones, the cause is often subsurface related. Inadequate base depth — Ottawa natural stone patios need a minimum 200 mm compacted granular base — or poor drainage allowing water to saturate the base layer will cause ongoing cracking regardless of how many individual stones you repair. Leda clay soils, common across much of Ottawa, are particularly problematic because they hold water and have significant frost heave potential.

Preventing future cracks comes down to managing moisture. Ensure joints are filled to prevent water from reaching the base layer, maintain proper drainage slope away from the house, and consider applying a breathable natural stone sealer that reduces moisture absorption without trapping vapour inside the stone. Sealing is especially

important for softer stones like limestone and sandstone. An Ottawa patio contractor who specializes in natural stone can evaluate whether your cracking pattern suggests a surface issue, a base issue, or a drainage issue — each requiring a very different solution.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- ALM Construction & Landscaping Inc.
- Pure Flow Water Solutions inc.
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q14

Should I power wash my Ottawa stone patio?

Power washing can be an effective cleaning method for an Ottawa stone patio, but it comes with real risks if done incorrectly — and the specific type of stone on your patio determines whether power washing is appropriate at all. Ottawa patios use a wide range of materials, from dense granite and hard-wearing concrete pavers to softer natural stones like limestone, sandstone, and flagstone, and each responds very differently to pressurized water.

For concrete pavers and granite, power washing at 1500-2000 PSI with a 25-40 degree fan tip is generally safe and effective. These materials are dense enough to withstand moderate pressure without surface damage. After an Ottawa winter — with accumulated road sand, de-icer residue, organic staining, and five months of grime — power washing is often the most efficient way to restore these surfaces.

For softer natural stones like limestone, sandstone, and certain types of flagstone, power washing requires much more caution. These stones have a softer surface that high pressure can erode, pit, or roughen. If you power wash limestone at the same 2000 PSI you would use on concrete pavers, you will visibly damage the surface finish. For these materials, keep pressure below 1200 PSI, use a wider fan tip (40 degree), and maintain a greater distance from the surface — at least 40-45 cm. Even then, test in an inconspicuous area first.

There are several situations where power washing an Ottawa stone patio is not advisable. If the polymeric sand in your joints is already deteriorating or below the chamfer line, power washing will blast out what remains, leaving open joints that allow water infiltration and weed growth. If your pavers have an existing sealer, aggressive power washing can strip it unevenly, creating a blotchy appearance that requires full sealer removal and reapplication to correct. And if your stone has existing cracks or delamination from freeze-thaw damage, the force of pressurized water can worsen the fractures.

The technique matters as much as the pressure setting. Always use consistent, overlapping passes at a uniform distance. Holding the wand closer in some spots than others creates visible light and dark bands on the surface that are surprisingly difficult to even out. Never use a zero-degree pencil tip on patio stone — it concentrates too much force in too small an area and will etch lines into virtually any paver material.

For Ottawa patios specifically, the spring clean-up timing is important. Wait until the frost has completely left the ground and the pavers have had at least 2-3 dry days. Washing pavers that are still on partially frozen ground can shift them, and the displaced water has nowhere to drain if the subsurface is still frozen, which can actually push pavers upward.

An alternative to full power washing is soft washing — using a lower pressure (under 1000 PSI) combined with an appropriate cleaning solution that does the chemical work so the water pressure does not have to. This is the preferred method for older natural stone patios, heritage properties, or any surface where preserving the natural patina matters. Ottawa stone patio professionals can assess your specific material and condition to recommend whether power washing, soft washing, or manual cleaning is the right approach for your situation.

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

- Homeupgraders
- JC Carpentry
- JL Signature Builds
- Nic's D.U.C.T Works Inc
- Stone and fern

[View all contractors ?](#)

How do I remove efflorescence from my Ottawa patio pavers?

Efflorescence — those white, powdery or crystalline deposits that appear on paver surfaces — is extremely common on Ottawa patios, especially during the first two to three years after installation. It occurs when water migrates through the paver, dissolves naturally occurring calcium salts within the concrete, and deposits them on the surface as the water evaporates. Ottawa's climate is practically designed to cause efflorescence: abundant moisture from 220+ cm of annual snowfall, constant water movement through freeze-thaw cycling, and spring conditions where wet pavers dry slowly in cool temperatures.

The first thing to understand is that efflorescence on newer pavers is almost always a temporary condition. It is not a defect in the paver and does not indicate a structural problem. Most efflorescence diminishes significantly after 2-3 years as the soluble salts within the concrete are gradually depleted. However, if you want to remove it for appearance, there are effective methods.

For light efflorescence, start with the simplest approach. A stiff bristle brush and clean water can remove surface deposits. Scrub in a circular motion and rinse thoroughly. Sometimes simply brushing the dry surface with a broom repeatedly over several weeks will wear away minor efflorescence as foot traffic and weather help too.

For moderate to heavy efflorescence, you will need an efflorescence cleaner — a mild acid-based product specifically formulated for concrete pavers. Products containing phosphoric acid or citric acid are effective without being overly aggressive. Before applying any acid-based cleaner, wet the paver surface thoroughly with plain water first. This prevents the acid from being absorbed too deeply into the paver, which can cause discoloration or surface damage. Apply the cleaner according to directions, let it react for the specified time (usually 3-5 minutes — do not let it dry on the surface), scrub with a stiff brush, and rinse extensively with clean water.

Do not use muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid) on concrete pavers. While it removes efflorescence quickly, it can etch the surface, alter the colour, and actually worsen efflorescence by opening pores that allow more moisture migration. This is a common DIY mistake that creates a worse problem than the original.

Timing matters for efflorescence treatment in Ottawa. The best window is a dry stretch in late spring or summer when pavers can stay dry for several days after treatment. Treating efflorescence in damp conditions or before a rain is pointless — the moisture will simply bring more salts to the surface. After successful removal during a dry period, applying a quality breathable sealer can significantly reduce recurrence by slowing moisture migration while still allowing the paver to release water vapour.

If efflorescence persists beyond 3 years or suddenly appears on an older patio, there may be an underlying moisture issue — poor drainage, a high water table, or water being directed toward the patio base from downspouts or grading. In those cases, the efflorescence is a symptom, not the core problem. An Ottawa patio professional can diagnose whether your efflorescence needs surface treatment, sealing, or a drainage correction to resolve it.

permanently.

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

- 613Bins
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Denys Builds Designs Renovations
- ZinoM Concrete & Landscaping
- Leeds Property Maintenance

[View all contractors ?](#)

What is the best way to clean patio pavers in Ottawa after winter?

Spring cleaning for an Ottawa patio is more than cosmetic — after five months of snow, ice, de-icers, sand, and gravel, your pavers need proper attention to prevent long-term damage. The best time to start is mid to late April, once the frost has fully left the ground and the surface has dried out for a few days. Cleaning pavers that are still sitting on frozen ground can shift them, and cleaning while puddles remain just moves the dirt around.

Begin by removing all the winter debris manually. Clear off any remaining snow piles, sweep away road sand and gravel that was tracked in or plowed onto the patio, and remove leaf litter and organic matter that accumulated before snowfall. Pay special attention to the edges where sand and debris tend to pile up — this material holds moisture against the paver edges and accelerates erosion.

For general dirt, grime, and salt residue, a garden hose with a stiff-bristled push broom works well for most Ottawa patios. Mix warm water with a mild dish soap (nothing bleach-based for coloured pavers) and scrub section by section. For stubborn salt stains — the white crystalline deposits left by calcium chloride and rock salt — use a dedicated paver cleaner with a mild acid component, or a 50/50 white vinegar and water solution. Apply, let it sit for 10-15 minutes, scrub, and rinse thoroughly.

If you notice white, chalky deposits that do not look like salt residue, that is likely efflorescence — a different issue caused by mineral salts leaching from within the paver itself. Standard cleaning will not remove efflorescence permanently; it requires a specific treatment approach.

Pressure washing is effective for deep cleaning but requires care. Keep the PSI between 1500-2000 and use a fan tip (25-40 degree), never a zero-degree tip which will erode the paver surface and blast out polymeric sand. Maintain a consistent distance of about 30 cm from the surface and work in even, overlapping passes. On concrete pavers, inconsistent pressure washing distance creates visible light and dark stripes that are difficult to correct.

After cleaning, inspect the polymeric sand in every joint. Ottawa winters are hard on joint sand — freeze-thaw cycles push it out, and snow removal often scrapes it away. Any joints where the sand has dropped below the paver chamfer need to be refilled. Wait until the pavers are completely dry (2-3 sunny days), sweep in new polymeric sand, and activate with a gentle mist. This is also the time to note any pavers that have heaved, cracked, or settled over winter so they can be addressed before regular use begins.

If your patio is heavily stained from rust, oil, or organic matter that has been sitting all winter, those specific stains each require targeted treatment. Ottawa patio maintenance professionals have commercial-grade cleaners and the experience to handle post-winter restoration without damaging the paver finish or stripping existing sealer.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- Rrenovations
- Demontigny Carpentry
- ARTEXPRO Tile & Finishes

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q17

How do I prepare my Ottawa patio for winter?

Winterizing your Ottawa patio properly in late October or early November can prevent thousands of dollars in spring repairs. With temperatures that plunge to -30°C, over 220 cm of seasonal snowfall, and 50+ freeze-thaw cycles, the preparation you do before the first frost directly determines how your patio emerges in April.

Start with a thorough cleaning. Remove all furniture, planters, grills, and accessories. Sweep the entire surface and clear organic debris from between paver joints — leaves and plant matter trapped in joints hold moisture, which freezes and expands, popping out polymeric sand and shifting pavers. A leaf blower works well for clearing joint debris without disturbing the sand itself.

Inspect the polymeric sand in your paver joints. If it has eroded below the paver chamfer in any areas, top it up and activate it with water before freeze-up. Empty joints are an open invitation for water to penetrate the base layer, and once that water freezes beneath the pavers, heaving is almost guaranteed. This single step — maintaining full polymeric sand joints — is the most effective frost-heave prevention for Ottawa paver patios.

Check the patio grade and drainage. Walk the entire surface during or just after a rain and look for any areas where water pools. Even small depressions that collect water will become ice problems, and repeated freezing in those spots accelerates settling. If you find pooling areas, they should be addressed before winter — either by lifting and releveling the affected pavers or by clearing any drainage paths that have become blocked with soil or debris.

If your patio has a sealer, confirm it is still performing by doing the water bead test. Drip water on the surface — if it soaks in rather than beading up, the sealer has worn through and moisture will penetrate the paver surface all winter. Resealing in late October is risky because you need several days above 10°C for proper curing, so if the window has passed, plan for a spring application instead.

For patio furniture and features, store metal furniture indoors or under proper covers to prevent rust staining on the pavers — iron rust stains are extremely difficult to remove from concrete or natural stone. Move planters off the patio entirely, as the moisture trapped beneath them will freeze and can crack both the planter and the paver underneath.

Finally, have your snow removal plan ready. Choose a shovel with a plastic or rubber edge rather than a metal blade, which chips and scratches paver surfaces. Designate where snow will be piled so that meltwater drains away from the patio and your foundation, not back across the surface. Ottawa patio contractors can do a pre-winter inspection to catch issues that are easier and cheaper to fix now than after five months of winter.

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

- Justyn Rook Contracting
- JC Carpentry
- Leeds Property Maintenance
- Jaiko Cleaning Services
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION

[View all contractors ?](#)

Q18

When should I reseal my paver patio in Ottawa?

Timing your paver sealing correctly in Ottawa makes a significant difference in how well the sealer bonds and how long it lasts. The ideal window is mid-May through early October, when daytime temperatures are consistently above 10°C and nighttime lows stay above 5°C for at least 24-48 hours after application. Most quality paver sealers need these conditions to cure properly — if temperatures drop below the threshold during curing, the sealer can cloud, peel, or fail to bond with the paver surface.

For most Ottawa patios, the sweet spot is late May to mid-June or September. July and August work as well, but extreme heat above 30°C can cause the sealer to dry too quickly on the surface before it penetrates the paver, leading to a white haze or uneven finish. If you are sealing during a hot stretch, work in the early morning or late afternoon when the pavers are not in direct sunlight.

As for frequency, plan to reseal your Ottawa patio every 2-4 years depending on the sealer type and the exposure your patio gets. Solvent-based sealers tend to last longer (3-4 years) but have stronger fumes and require more ventilation during application. Water-based sealers are easier to apply and more environmentally friendly but typically need reapplication every 2-3 years under Ottawa conditions. Our winters — 220+ cm of snow, repeated salt or de-icer exposure, and the constant freeze-thaw cycling — break down sealers faster than in milder climates.

Before resealing, the patio must be thoroughly cleaned. Any dirt, organic growth, or efflorescence trapped under a new sealer coat will be locked in permanently. Pressure wash at moderate PSI (around 1500-2000), let the surface dry completely for at least 48 hours, and then apply the sealer. Applying sealer to a damp surface is a common mistake that causes milky discoloration, especially with solvent-based products.

You will know it is time to reseal when water no longer beads on the paver surface — instead, it soaks in and darkens the stone. This bead test takes five seconds and tells you exactly when protection has worn off. Some high-traffic areas like the path from your back door may need touch-up sealing a year before the rest of the patio.

A properly sealed patio resists staining, inhibits weed growth in the joints, and — most relevant for Ottawa — helps prevent moisture penetration that leads to freeze-thaw spalling. If your pavers are already showing surface flaking or delamination, sealing alone will not fix that damage, but it will slow further deterioration. Ottawa patio specialists can help you choose the right sealer type for your specific paver material, whether it is concrete, natural stone, or porcelain.

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

- 613Bins
- JC Carpentry
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION
- Eastern Residential Solution
- Best Hand2Hand moving company

[View all contractors ?](#)

How do I fix sunken or uneven pavers on my Ottawa patio?

Sunken or uneven pavers are one of the most common patio issues in Ottawa, and our freeze-thaw cycle — over 50 transitions per winter between roughly -30°C and above zero — is almost always the root cause. Water infiltrates beneath the pavers, freezes, expands the base material, then thaws and leaves voids. Over a few seasons, individual pavers or entire sections can drop 1-3 cm, creating trip hazards and pooling water that accelerates the problem.

The repair process starts by carefully removing the affected pavers and any immediately surrounding them. Use two flat-head screwdrivers or paver pullers to lift them out without chipping the edges. Once removed, examine the bedding sand layer underneath. In most Ottawa repairs, you will find the bedding sand has either washed out or compacted unevenly. Scrape out the remaining bedding material down to the gravel base and check whether the base itself has settled. If the granular A base has dropped, you will need to add fresh material and compact it with a hand tamper or small plate compactor before rebuilding the bedding layer.

For the bedding layer, use coarse concrete sand (not play sand or limestone screenings, which hold moisture and are more susceptible to frost heave). Spread it to a consistent 25 mm depth using screed rails for accuracy. This uniform depth is critical — inconsistent bedding thickness is what causes pavers to settle unevenly in the first place.

Before resetting the pavers, check each one for cracks or surface damage from freeze-thaw. Ottawa winters are brutal on lower-quality pavers, so replace any that have delaminated or cracked through. Reset the pavers, confirm they are level with the surrounding surface using a straight edge, and then sweep polymeric sand into the joints. Activate the polymeric sand with a fine mist — not a heavy spray, which can wash it out before it sets.

If you are dealing with widespread settling across a large area rather than a few isolated pavers, the underlying issue may be inadequate base depth. Ottawa patios need a minimum 200 mm compacted granular base to handle our frost conditions, and high-traffic areas or those on clay-heavy Leda clay soils may need 250-300 mm. A section-by-section repair might be warranted, or in some cases, a full base rebuild is more cost-effective than repeated spot fixes.

Proper drainage also prevents recurrence. Make sure the patio surface still slopes away from your home at roughly 2% grade. If settling has reversed the grade direction, water will pool against your foundation and the settling will only get worse. Ottawa contractors experienced with our soil conditions can assess whether your base needs reinforcement or if a simpler bedding sand replacement will hold up through the next several winters.

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

- Luxe Painting and Renovations
- RenoMotion Inc.
- 613 Interlock
- Steven Labelle - Your Complete Home Renovator
- ALTIOR CONSTRUCTION

[View all contractors ?](#)

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Patios. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified, licensed contractors and your local building authority before starting any patio, deck, or outdoor living project. Information is current as of October 25, 2026 and may change. Visit ottawapatios.com for the latest answers.