

ask The Family Handyman

>> America's leading home improvement magazine answers your new-house questions

brick stains be gone! >>

Q Our new home has water stains on the brick from the previous owner's sprinkler. Is there any way to clean this stuff off?

A Most water stains like yours are composed of calcium carbonate, and the best way to get rid of them is with an acid-based cleaner. Avoid using muriatic acid, because it can discolor the brick and corrode metals it may come in contact with. Instead, use a specialized brick cleaner. Most brick or masonry dealers sell such products or visit a Web site such as www.prosoco.com for more products and information.



<< to grout or not to grout

Q Around our new bathtub there are gaps between the tile and the tub. What's the best way to grout that small, awkward space?

A Don't grout it at all—caulk it. Your bathtub moves up and down a little as it fills and empties; inflexible grout will eventually crack and fall out. The best way to keep a watertight seal is to apply a high-quality, flexible caulk at that seam. Many tile outlets stock colored caulks that match the grouts they sell.