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4 Ways to Avoid Foundation Problems

Until it cracks or leaks, most of us don't think about our home's foundation. That's our first mistake.



When cracks and leaks show up, you've already created or ignored problems that damage foundations. Here are mistakes that can cause foundation woes and, if unresolved, can make matters dramatically worse. Then it can seriously damage your home and your wallet.

1. Landscaping mistakes

Poor soil excavation and slopes can direct water toward the base of your house and through foundation walls. Make sure your yard is graded away from your house at least 150mm in 3 meters so soil, paths or pavers slope away from your house.

You may have to build on a sloping block, dig a trench, or install a French drain to divert rainwater and surface runoff away from your home. Ensure all external foundation walls are adequately waterproofed to prevent seepage to the under floor space. Also, be careful when you apply mulch on foundation plants. Make sure that slopes away from your home, too.

2. Down pipes

Down pipes should be connected to storm water drainage systems or installed to direct rain and roof runoff away from your house. But if you don't extend the down pipe 2 to 3 metres away from the house, you'll dump water on your foundation. You can buy extenders from plain (\$15) to fancy (\$30). Or bury a long down pipe diverter underground and drain the water to the curb, a storm drain, or to a spot in your yard where the water will soak into the soil.

3. Water woes

Avoid letting the soil around your house completely dry out and shrink during a long dry spell. The next big rain could soak the soil, making it expand dramatically and putting stress on your foundation walls. In drought, run a soaker hose around your house at least 150mm from the foundation and 75mm under the soil. That should help quiet and stabilise any dramatic soil contraction and expansion.

4. Root riots

Tree and shrub roots can compete with your soil for moisture during drought, causing your foundation to settle and sink unevenly. When that happens, plaster walls, external brick cladding and foundation walls can crack, and windows and doors will stick in their frames.

To prevent a war for water, plant deep-rooted trees and shrubs away from the house. If the branches touch the house, the tree is too close. A rule of thumb to live by is plant the tree or shrub the same distance from your house as its mature height.

To find out more and get your home inspected call your local independent property inspector on **1800 17 88 22** or email info@ipi.net.au

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