



## May 2012 Newsletter



*“The air is like a butterfly  
With frail blue wings.  
The happy earth looks at the sky  
And sings.”  
- Joyce Kilmer, Spring*

*“When April steps aside for May,  
Like diamonds all the rain-drops glisten;  
Fresh violets open every day:  
To some new bird each hour we listen.”  
- Lucy Larcom*

### When Block Foundations Go Bad



The first line of defense: proper back fill procedures go a long way toward eliminating water problems. At the risk of sounding simplistic, be sure water drains away from the home. You'd be amazed how many builders get this wrong. Code is clear about the minimal requirement. In Alabama, it is recommended at least 1 inch of fall over 12 feet for the first 10 feet, while the states in the middle of America encourage 12 inches of fall over 12 feet. The difference in the two codes has to do with frost levels. Set code as the base line and improve the grade as reasonable to direct water away from the home. Remember your lot will have to drain all of your water, the neighbor's water and your roof water. It's usually best to err on the side of caution.

Sometimes it's hard to understand the effects of water on a home until you can see a good picture. I have included a picture from the Taunton's For Pros By Pros so you can see the difference between proper grade and poor grade. \*Continued on next page\*

# Pink Champagne Cupcakes

## Cupcake Mix

1 box Betty Crocker SuperMoist white cake mix  
1 1/4 cups champagne at room temperature  
1/3 cup vegetable oil  
3 egg whites  
4-5 drops red food color

## Champagne Frosting

1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened  
4 cups powdered sugar  
1/4 cup champagne  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
4-5 drops red food color

## Garnishes

Betty Crocker pink decorating sugar and edible pink pearls

## Directions

Heat oven to 350 or 325 for dark or nonstick pans. Place cute baking cups in cupcake pan. Mix dry cake mix and champagne in large bowl. Add oil, egg whites and food color. Beat with mixer at medium speed for 2 minutes. Pour batter in pan. Bake 17-22 minutes. Cool 10 minutes and then move to cooling rack to cool completely before icing. Mix frosting ingredients and beat with mixer on medium speed until smooth. Frost cooled cupcakes and sprinkle with garnishes.



## When Block Foundations Go Bad (continued)

The top photo shows how water drains from the roof and the surface of the ground. This water drains towards your foundation instead of away causing hydraulic pressure at or under the foundation. This water, if left unattended, can damage the foundation. The second photo shows proper drainage that prevents water access to the foundation. This is the path of least resistance. The second photo is what you need to see around your home.

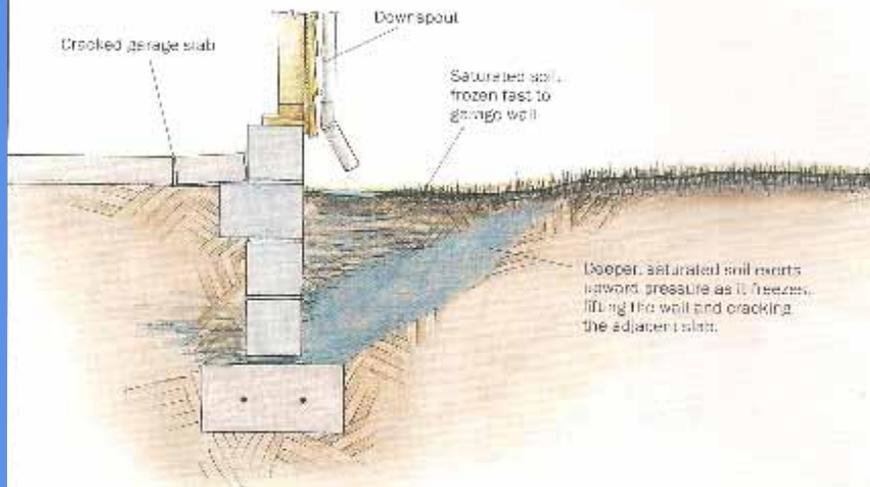
Flower beds and curb appeal: The number one cause of pooling water at the foundation is settled soil. When we plant flowers and trees we do not tamp the soil (tamping makes the soil hard) so the loose soil settles based on the drains from the roof causing collection points at the foundation. So what do you do? If you have the opportunity at construction, improve the soil and direct it away from the home. If not, it's time to assess how urgent the concern is and if gutters will help. In addition, monkey grass is a common liner for flower beds and is bad about making a dam for water to pool and porch systems often protrude from the main structure and create boxes that prohibit good drainage. These signs will be evident in a good rain.

The first step in preventing or resolving a water concern at your foundation will include an umbrella and a good heavy rain. While it is raining, grab your umbrella and inspect the common grade around your home. Does the water drain away? You will most likely find a spot somewhere that needs improvement.

Now that you have a good foundation it's time to see the effect of water and how it can damage your foundation. Our next newsletter will cover the never ending questions of "How do you know if that crack in the foundation wall is active? Does it need to be repaired? and What does it mean for the future of the home?" We will address each type of crack and what causes them and how to apply the needed improvements.

## Saturated Soil Leads to Frost Heaving

In a common scenario, water from downspouts has nowhere to go but next to the foundation. This results in damage to a garage slab from soil freezing.



### KEEPING WATER AWAY IS THE SOLUTION

Proper detailing can be as simple as sloping the ground away from the house and using downspout extensions to deposit runoff away from the backfill or to undisturbed soil.

