

# Summer shine

Find out which outdoor cleaners are best for sprucing up decking and patios, and whether green products are any good

Last summer was a washout, and this year we're yearning for a better one so we can spend more time outdoors. If your decking or patio is looking grubby, try one of the cleaners we've tested to lift the grime and make the most of your garden.

You can lift surface dirt on patios with cleaning products, but you really need to use a pressure washer to get it looking like new (we're testing pressure washers in September). Don't use a pressure washer on decking – it could raise the wood fibres of worn decking and make it more vulnerable to weathering.

Besides, we found it easy to get good results on decking using cleaners. We tested four decking cleaners that aren't in the table – head to [www.which.co.uk/](http://www.which.co.uk/)

**We've worked out which products are the cheapest to use**

**outdoor cleaners** for the full results.

Three were very efficient: Ronseal Decking Cleaner and Reviver, Jeyes Fluid and Cuprinol Decking Cleaner. They got similarly good results to the Best Buys pictured below, which also clean decking. The Tesco Decking Cleaner hardly made a difference – even after a recommended second application.

The patio-cleaning products in our table cost between £3 and £16, but as many need to be diluted before use it's not obvious which works out the cheapest – so we've done the sums for you. It shouldn't cost more than about 50p per square metre to use our Best Buys. Many work out even cheaper, but we found they didn't do the job as well.

## How we test

**Our in-depth testing revealed which cleaners scrub up well**

Each cleaner was applied to decking and patio squares, as applicable – we left non-treated areas around the test sections for comparison. Although cleaning power is the most important aspect of our results, we also rated how you apply the products and how hassle-free (or otherwise) the whole process is.

We noted if any smelt particularly unpleasant – most weren't too bad, especially after dilution. But Betterware Path, Patio and Drive Cleaner (13) and our Don't Buy Algon Organic Path & Patio Cleaner (17) smelt quite strongly acidic during use.

You don't want new stains replacing the ones you've just cleaned off. In our test, the Don't Buy Algon left noticeable white marks.



## The alternative

**Do green products and home remedies clean up as well as their chemical rivals?**

Many cleaners in our tests contain chemicals, and several warn to keep children, pets and plants away during application – which isn't convenient if they take a while to dry.

Apart from the Best Buy Biotol Concentrated Algae Cleaner (2), which claims to be organic, the other alternatives we tried were quite disappointing. Both Just Green Just Patio & Concrete Cleaner (10) and Ecochem Patio and Paving Cleaner (14) were more effective on algae than grime. Clearway Environmentally Safe Outdoor Surface Cleaner (16) didn't clean our

grubby test patch, and Algon Organic Path & Patio Cleaner (17) is a Don't Buy (see opposite).

### Home remedies

Neat vinegar got rid of most of the algae on our patio, though general grime remained. We also tried Fairy washing-up liquid, but it took ages to rinse off all the bubbles.

Vinegar could damage plants and washing-up liquid needs to be thoroughly washed off. These home remedies may tempt you as they're cheap and ready to hand, but neither can match our Best Buys for cleaning.

## 74% Wickes Patio and Decking Cleaner

£8.99 5ltr

This Wickes own-brand product cleans both patio and decking very well and is easy to use. Our patio was substantially cleaner than before, and the decking lighter and much less grubby. It's also suitable for block-paving drives, and claims to remove dirt, moss, algae and mildew. You scrub it in, leave for 20 minutes and then rinse it off. You need to rinse the froth away thoroughly if it comes into contact with grass and plants, to avoid scorching leaves or damaging roots.

**WORTH KNOWING** You don't need to mix it and it doesn't smell bad – just faintly of detergent.

Available Wickes Suitable for Decking and patio  
Size 5 litres Cost per square metre 45p



## 72% Biotol Concentrated Algae Cleaner

£6.99 1ltr

Despite its name, this cleaner got rid of more than just algae. It substantially improved our test patio and was easy to use. You can also use it on most hard and porous surfaces, including polythene and wood, and it claims to be safe to use around people, pets and ponds. This cleaner's less frothy than the Wickes (1), so you'll spend less time rinsing it off. It has just a faint chemical smell. We tested the one-litre concentrated version – this cleaner is also available ready-diluted as a 500ml spray called Biotol Mould and Algae Cleaner.

**WE LIKE** It's non toxic, so safe to use around pets and plants.

Available Independent garden centres; online Suitable for Decking and patio Size 500ml diluted spray and 1 litre concentrate bottle Cost per square metre 35p



MODEL <sup>a</sup>	SPECIFICATION				WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE			SCORE %
	PRICE (£)	SIZE (litres)	PRICE PER APPLICATION (p)	SAFE FOR CHILDREN/PETS	CLEANING POWER	EASE OF USE	SMELL	
<b>1 WICKES</b> Patio and Decking Cleaner	8.99	5	45		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>74</b>
<b>2 BIOTAL</b> Concentrated Algae Cleaner	6.99	1	35	✓	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>72</b>
<b>3 AQUASEAL</b> Acid Free Patio Cleaner	3.78	2.5	50		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>69</b>
<b>4 JEYES FLUID</b> Multi-Purpose Disinfectant For Outdoor Cleaning	3.46	2	8		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	<b>69</b>
<b>5 NO NONSENSE</b> Path, Patio & Driveway Cleaner <sup>b</sup>	4.99	5	25		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>69</b>
<b>6 WICKES</b> Patio Cleaner <sup>b</sup>	3.99	4	25		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>66</b>
<b>7 BAYER GARDEN</b> Path and Patio Cleaner Concentrate	3.99	2.5	13		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>65</b>
<b>8 LITHOFIN</b> MN Outdoor Cleaner	13.25	1	265		★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>65</b>
<b>9 DE-SOLV-IT</b> Path & Patio Cleaner <sup>b</sup>	6.99	5	35		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>61</b>
<b>10 JUST GREEN</b> Just Patio & Concrete Cleaner	4.99	0.75	1	✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>61</b>
<b>11 THOMPSONS</b> Fungicidal Patio and Paving Cleaner	2.94	2.5	39		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>60</b>
<b>12 JEYES FLUID</b> Path, Patio and Drive Cleaner	6.99	1	6		★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>58</b>
<b>13 BETTERWARE</b> Path, Patio and Drive Cleaner <sup>b</sup>	5.99	1	25		★★★★★	★★★★★	★	<b>57</b>
<b>14 ECOCHEM</b> Patio and Paving Cleaner	6.11	1	92	✓	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>57</b>
<b>15 ARMILLATOX</b> Soap Based Outdoor Cleaner	13.99	1	14		★★★	★★★★★	★★★	<b>54</b>
<b>16 CLEARWAY</b> Environmentally Safe Outdoor Surface Cleaner	9.60	2.5	24	✓	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	<b>42</b>
<b>17 ALGON</b> Organic Path & Patio Cleaner	7.00	2.5	11		★	★★★★★	★★	<b>28</b>

<sup>a</sup> We also tested Patio Magic! MMC Concentrate – its formulation has changed since testing, so it is not in the table <sup>b</sup> Contains hydrochloric acid, which can be harmful on skin or eye contact, or if ingested

### USING THE TABLE

The more stars the better.

### Specification

**Price For Best Buys** we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we

went to press. Other prices are a guide to what you should expect to pay. **Price per application** Based on the manufacturer's maximum recommended amount (where

applicable) of product needed per square metre. **Safe for children/pets** Manufacturer claims that the product is suitable for application around children or pets.

### Test performance

**Cleaning power** The cleaning effectiveness of each product on test is rated from ★ = no noticeable improvement, to ★★★★★ = excellent cleaning power.

### Ease of use

This comprises a combination of ease of preparation and application, and the clarity of the instructions. **Smell** Rated for strength and nature of odour.

### Score

Ignores price and is based on:  
Cleaning power **70%**  
Ease of use **20%**  
Smell **10%**

## Don't Buy **Scrubbing with water cleaned better than this product**



Our lowest-rated product, Algon Organic Path & Patio Cleaner, didn't spruce up our dirty test patio.

The Algon cleaner claims it helps bring out the natural colour on virtually any surface. 'Just apply and walk away', it says in the blurb – but it also says ingrained dirt and



stains may need high-pressure treatment. Our patio squares looked much the same just after we'd used it. After a few days, some algae had died back – but other products in our test were faster and more effective. This product also smelt very acidic and left a white deposit.

## Contacts

**Algon** 01772 823370  
www.algonorganics.co.uk

**Aquaseal** 0870 381 6843  
www.aquasealeurope.co.uk

**Armillatox** 01773 590566  
www.armillatox.co.uk

**Bayer Garden** 0845 345 4100  
www.bayergarden.co.uk

**Betterware** 0845 121 0110  
www.betterware.co.uk

**Biotal** 029 2047 5550  
www.biotal.co.uk

**Clearway** 0161 277 9518  
www.byotrol.com

**Cuprinol** 0870 444 1111  
www.cuprinol.co.uk

**De-Solv-it** 01933 402822  
www.desolvit.co.uk

**Ecochem** 01752 334350  
www.geocel.co.uk

**Jeyes Fluid** 01842 757575  
www.jeyes.co.uk

**Just Green** 01621 785088  
www.just-green.com

**Lithofin** 01962 732126  
www.lithofin.co.uk

**No Nonsense** 01933 402822  
www.mykal.co.uk

**Patio Magic** 020 7228 1182  
www.brintonproducts.co.uk

**Ronseal** 0114 240 9469  
www.ronseal.co.uk

**Tesco** 0800 505555; www.tesco.com

**Thompsons** 0114 240 9469  
www.thompsonsweatherproofing.co.uk

**Wickes** 0800 106068  
www.wickes.co.uk