

Pressure Washing Brick House: Done Right and Done Wrong

The PSI That Cleans Versus the PSI That Destroys

by Travis Nech

Champion Brick Repair — championbrickrepair.com

Champion Brick Repair — championbrickrepair.com

Copyright © 2026 by Travis Nech. All rights reserved.

This book is free. Share it with a neighbor who needs it.

Chapter 1: Pressure Washing Brick House — The Number That Matters

There's a number that decides whether washing your brick house is maintenance or vandalism, and it's the number on the pressure washer's dial. Get it right and your brick comes out looking like the day it was laid. Get it wrong and you'll be calling a mason — calling me — to fix what the water tore up. I've repaired the aftermath of bad pressure washing more times than I can count, and every single one of those jobs started with somebody who thought brick was indestructible and water was harmless.

Brick is strong. Mortar is not — by design. Remember what I said in the tuckpointing book: mortar is the weak link on purpose. It's supposed to be softer than the brick so the wall can move without cracking units. A pressure washer doesn't know that. A 3,000-PSI stream at close range with a narrow nozzle will cut through mortar joints like a knife, etch the faces of softer brick, and drive water deep into the wall where it doesn't belong. The homeowner watches the green algae disappear and thinks it worked. What actually

happened is the cleaning chemical did the work and the pressure did the damage — and the damage doesn't show up until months later, when joints start crumbling and spalled brick faces start flaking.

So here's the number. For rinsing brick, the safe zone is 500 to 800 PSI with a wide 25-degree or 40-degree fan nozzle, held twelve to eighteen inches from the wall. That's not my opinion — it's the consensus of the wash professionals who do this for a living, and it lines up with what the Brick Industry Association has said for years in their Technical Note 20 on cleaning brickwork. The BIA recognizes three cleaning methods: hand cleaning with bucket and brush or low-pressure water-detergent spray; high-pressure water spray; and abrasive blasting. And the industry's own guidance says the last two should be reserved for jobs where the gentle methods failed — they're not the starting point, they're the escalation.

Let that sink in. The brick industry's official position is that high pressure is the fallback, not the default. The default is chemistry and patience: let the detergent do the work, rinse gently, walk away. The pressure washer is a rinse tool, not a cleaning tool. Anybody who tells you otherwise is selling you

a damaged wall.

This book is the full story: what soft washing is, which detergents work on which stains, how to clean brick without hurting it, what bad washing does to a wall (with the repair bills to prove it), and how to hire a wash company that won't wreck your masonry. If you take one sentence from this book, take this one: the cleaning power comes from the chemical, not the pressure.

Chapter 2: Soft Wash — The Method That Respects the Mortar

Soft washing is exactly what it sounds like: cleaning with low pressure and the right chemistry instead of brute force. The process is simple. You pre-wet the brick. You apply a cleaning solution with a low-pressure sprayer — not the pressure washer, just a pump sprayer or the washer's chemical injector at its lowest setting. You let it dwell — ten, fifteen minutes — while the detergent breaks down algae, mildew, mold, and grime. You agitate stubborn spots with a soft-bristle brush if needed. Then you rinse with low pressure, 500 to 800 PSI, wide fan, good distance.

That's it. No drama. The reason it works is that the stains on a brick house are almost never a pressure problem — they're a biology problem. That green and black film on the north side of your house is algae and mildew growing on the surface. It dies on contact with the right detergent. You don't need to blast it off; you need to kill it and rinse away the residue. A pressure washer set to "destroy" is doing surgery with a chainsaw on a problem that needed tweezers.

The professional soft-wash companies have this down to a science. They use sodium hypochlorite — bleach — mixed with water and a surfactant that helps it cling to the wall instead of running off. The bleach kills the organic growth on contact. The surfactant gives it dwell time. The rinse is gentle. The whole job on a typical Texas brick home takes a few hours, and the wall looks new without a single joint disturbed.

Compare that to the guy with the 4,000-PSI machine and a zero-degree nozzle who "really gets in there." He's not cleaning better. He's removing the outer skin of your mortar joints and calling it clean. I've run my finger along joints after jobs like that — you can scoop the mortar out like wet sand. That wall just lost years of its life in an afternoon.

There's a cost angle too, and it's in your favor. Pressure washing a brick house runs \$0.10 to \$0.40 per square foot nationally, and in Dallas the average whole-house wash runs about \$270, with most jobs landing between \$165 and \$375. Soft washing doesn't cost more than pressure washing — it's the same equipment, the same visit, just the right technique. There's no reason to accept the destructive version when the gentle version costs the same.

Chapter 3: The Right Chemical for the Right Stain

Not every stain on brick is the same, and the detergent that kills algae won't touch mineral deposits. Using the wrong chemical is the second-most common mistake I see, right behind using too much pressure. Here's the field guide.

Algae, mildew, mold — the green and black film. This is the most common brick stain in Texas, especially on north-facing walls and shaded areas. The answer is sodium hypochlorite (bleach) diluted with water plus a surfactant. It kills the growth on contact. This is the bread and butter of soft washing, and it's the safest chemical cleaning you'll do on brick — when it's rinsed properly, it leaves nothing behind that harms the masonry.

Dirt and general grime. A mild detergent — dish soap and water, or a purpose-made house wash — with a soft brush. This is bucket-and-brush territory, the BIA's first recommended method. For a small area, honestly, a garden hose, a bucket, and a brush will do what a pressure washer does, with zero risk.

Efflorescence — the white powdery crust. This is mineral salts migrating out of the brick and mortar with moisture. It looks like white frost on the wall. Here's the critical thing: efflorescence is a symptom, not the disease. The disease is water getting into the masonry. You can clean the white crust off — a stiff dry brush first, then a specialty efflorescence cleaner if needed — but if you don't find where the water is coming from, it'll be back in a season. I see homeowners wash efflorescence off the same wall every year and never ask why it keeps coming back. The answer is always water: a failed joint, a bad flashing detail, a sprinkler hitting the wall, grade sloping toward the house.

Mortar smears and construction stains. On newer brickwork, this is the mason's mess — mortar smeared on the brick faces during construction. The pros use proprietary masonry cleaners — products like PROSOCO's SureKlean line — matched to the brick type. There's one rule the manufacturers repeat in capital letters: never use unbuffered muriatic acid on brick. Straight muriatic acid burns the brick face, bleaches colored mortar, and leaves a wall that looks worse than the smear did. If your new brickwork needs cleaning, it should be done by someone who knows which proprietary cleaner matches your brick — or better, by the

mason who laid it, since cleaning new masonry is part of a proper job.

Rust stains. Usually from a metal fixture — a rusting lintel, a hose bib, an old satellite mount — bleeding onto the brick. Clean the rust with a rust-specific masonry cleaner, but the real fix is dealing with the metal: a rusting steel lintel above a window or garage is a structural issue wearing a cosmetic disguise, and washing the stain without addressing the lintel is just scheduling the next wash.

Paint. If someone painted the brick and now it's peeling, that's not a washing job — that's a paint-removal job, and it's the subject of a whole other book in this library. Don't try to blast paint off brick with a pressure washer. You'll take the brick face with it.

One more rule that applies to all chemical cleaning: test in an inconspicuous spot first. Every time. Brick varies — the same cleaner that's fine on one wall can discolor another, especially on light-colored or flashed brick. And pre-wet the wall before you apply anything. Dry brick drinks chemical deep into the masonry; wet brick keeps the chemistry working on the surface where the stain is.

Chapter 4: The Damage I've Repaired After Bad Pressure Washing

I want to tell you what the repair side of this looks like, because the damage from a bad wash job doesn't look like damage at first. It looks like a clean house. The bill comes later.

The most common repair I do after pressure washing is repointing. The washer blasted the joints — not enough to see it from the curb, but enough to remove the outer half-inch of mortar and open up the joint to water. A year or two later, the homeowner notices the joints look recessed, or crumbly, or there's efflorescence blooming where water is now getting in. The fix is cutting out the damaged joints and repointing — the same \$500 to \$2,500 tuckpointing job we'd do for age-related failure, except this failure was manufactured in an afternoon by a guy with a machine. I've done this repair on walls less than ten years old that should have needed nothing for another twenty.

The second repair is spalled brick. Some brick — especially softer, older, or lower-fired brick — can't take concentrated

pressure on its face. The washer etches the surface, breaking the hard outer skin of the brick (the "fireskin" that protects it). Once that skin is broken, the brick absorbs water freely, and in a freeze — or even just through salt crystallization — the face pops off in flakes. Spalled brick can't be patched. The units have to be cut out and replaced, one by one, at \$350 to \$1,000 for a chimney-sized area and scaling up from there. On a wall where a washer went to town with a narrow nozzle, I've replaced dozens of units.

The third one is the sneakiest: water driven behind the brick veneer. Brick veneer on a Texas home is a single layer of brick over a wood frame, with an air gap between. That gap is supposed to stay dry — it's part of how the wall manages moisture. A pressure washer aimed at an angle, especially around windows, doors, vents, and anywhere the veneer meets trim, can force water straight through the joints and into that cavity. Now you've got wet sheathing, wet insulation, and a mold problem inside the wall — from a "cleaning" job. This is why the pros wash with the spray angled downward and keep their distance around every opening. Water behind brick veneer is the most expensive consequence in this chapter, because the repair isn't masonry anymore — it's wall surgery.

And then there's the damage to everything that isn't brick. A careless washer etches window glass, strips paint off trim, blows the seals on double-pane windows, forces water under siding on adjacent walls, kills landscaping with chemical runoff, and peels the coating off concrete. The brick usually survives the worst of it — it's everything around the brick that pays.

Add it up: a \$270 wash done wrong can generate a \$2,000 repointing bill, a \$1,500 brick replacement bill, or a five-figure wall repair. The wash is the cheapest part of this story. It's also the part that causes the expensive parts.

Chapter 5: Old Brick Is a Different Animal

Everything in this book so far applies doubly to old brick — and by old, I mean brick laid before about 1940, the soft, low-fired brick set in lime mortar that you find on historic homes and old commercial buildings.

Old brick is softer than modern brick. Lime mortar is much softer than modern mortar — you can scratch it with a fingernail. Put a pressure washer on a lime-mortar wall and you're not cleaning it, you're demolishing it joint by joint. The restoration professionals are unanimous on this: do not power wash historic brick. Period. The safe method is hand washing — bucket, soft-bristle brush, mild detergent — or a soft wash at the gentlest settings, and even then only after testing.

There's another trap with old brick: the patina. A century-old brick wall has a character — slight color variation, softened edges, the look of age — that power washing strips away along with the dirt. The wall comes out looking raw and new, and on a historic building that's not an improvement, it's damage to the building's character and value. Preservation

people will tell you, correctly, that the goal is to clean the wall, not to make it look like it was built yesterday.

Wire brushes are out too — on any brick, but especially old. A wire brush scores the brick face and leaves behind tiny fragments of wire that rust into orange stains. Nylon or natural bristle only.

If you own an older brick home in Texas — and there are plenty, from the Craftsman bungalows of the inner cities to the old farmhouses out in the country — treat the brick like the antique it is. Gentle methods, mild chemistry, no pressure washer. And if the wall needs more than cleaning — if the lime mortar is failing — that work needs a mason who understands lime mortar, because pointing old soft brick with hard modern mortar will crack the brick within a few years. That's a repointing book topic, but it starts with the same principle as this chapter: old masonry plays by older rules.

Chapter 6: Doing It Yourself — The Right Way

You can wash your own brick house safely. It's not complicated; it just requires patience and the discipline to keep the pressure down. Here's the method.

What you need: a garden hose with a spray nozzle or a pressure washer you can turn DOWN (this is the key — if your machine won't go low, don't use it); a pump sprayer for the cleaning solution; household bleach; a bleach-stable surfactant or a squirt of dish soap; a soft-bristle brush on a pole for stubborn spots; plastic sheeting and tape for covering fixtures; and eye protection, because bleach in the eyes is no joke.

Step 1: Protect. Cover exterior fixtures, outlets, and anything the chemical shouldn't touch with plastic sheeting. Drench all landscaping and grass around the house with plain water — wet plants are far less vulnerable to chemical overspray, and you'll rinse them again after.

Step 2: Pre-wet the wall. Soak the brick thoroughly with plain water, working from the bottom up. This is the step

everyone skips and it's one of the most important: pre-wetting keeps the brick from absorbing the cleaning chemical deep into the masonry. Wet brick cleans on the surface. Dry brick drinks the bleach.

Step 3: Apply the solution, bottom up. Mix your bleach solution in the pump sprayer — a typical house-wash mix is in the neighborhood of one part bleach to four or five parts water with surfactant, but follow the ratio on whatever house-wash product you're using. Spray it on in manageable sections, starting at the bottom and working up. Bottom-up application prevents dirty chemical from streaking down over dry brick below and leaving stripes.

Step 4: Let it dwell. Ten to fifteen minutes. The chemical is doing the work — killing the algae and loosening the grime. If a section starts to dry, mist it lightly with water. Don't let the solution bake dry on the wall in Texas sun; work in the morning or on a cloudy day, and work in sections you can rinse before they dry.

Step 5: Agitate the stubborn spots. A soft-bristle brush on the heavy algae areas, the shaded north wall, around the hose bibs and anywhere grime has built up. Gentle — you're helping the chemical, not scrubbing the wall raw.

Step 6: Rinse, top down. Now the pressure washer earns its keep — at 500 to 800 PSI, 25 or 40-degree fan nozzle, twelve to eighteen inches from the wall, rinsing from the top down so the clean water pushes everything downward and off. Keep the wand moving. Never hold it in one spot. Never use the narrow nozzle on brick, ever.

Step 7: Rinse the landscaping again and pull the plastic off the fixtures.

That's a proper DIY brick wash. Total cost: maybe fifty dollars in materials and a Saturday morning. And your mortar joints will be exactly where you left them.

What NOT to do: don't use the red zero-degree nozzle on anything attached to your house. Don't wash in direct blazing sun if you can avoid it. Don't mix bleach with anything containing ammonia or acids. And if the wall has failing mortar, loose brick, or cracks — wash gently by hand or fix the masonry first. A pressure washer, even a gentle one, will find every weak spot in the wall and make it worse.

Chapter 7: Hiring a Wash Company — What to Ask

Most people are going to hire this out, and that's fine — a good wash company will do in three hours what takes you all weekend. But the difference between a good wash company and a wall-wrecker is about five questions.

"Do you soft wash, or do you pressure wash?" You want to hear "soft wash" — low pressure, chemical-driven cleaning. If the answer is "we pressure wash everything" or some version of "we've got a big machine," keep looking. The size of the machine is not a selling point on brick.

"What PSI will you use on the brick?" You want a number in the hundreds, not the thousands. Five hundred to eight hundred for the rinse. If he says 3,000 PSI and a turbo nozzle, that's the guy from Chapter 4, and you're about to fund my next repointing job.

"What chemical do you use, and do you pre-wet and post-rinse the landscaping?" A professional has a specific answer — bleach-based house wash with surfactant, pre-wet the plants, rinse after. Vague answers mean he's winging it.

"How do you handle the windows, vents, and openings?"

You're listening for awareness that water forced into openings is a problem — angled spray, distance around openings, no direct blast at window seals. If he looks confused by the question, he's never thought about it, which means he's been forcing water into walls for years.

"Are you insured?" Non-negotiable. If he etches your windows, kills your landscaping, or damages the masonry, his insurance pays — not your homeowner's policy, not your pocket.

Also: get the price per square foot or a flat quote for the whole house, and be suspicious of anyone dramatically cheaper than the others. In Dallas, a whole-house wash runs \$165 to \$375. Somebody offering to do it for \$99 is cutting a corner, and on brick, the corner he cuts is the one that protects your mortar.

And one thing I tell every customer: the cheapest wash is the one you only do when the wall needs it. Brick doesn't need washing every year. In Texas, every two to three years is plenty for most homes, or when the algae film is visible from the curb. Washing on a schedule whether it needs it or not is just extra wear on the masonry for no benefit.

Chapter 8: What Water Does Inside a Brick Wall

To understand why pressure matters, you need to understand what brick does with water — because brick is not waterproof. It's a sponge. A fired clay brick can absorb a significant percentage of its weight in water, and it does it through millions of microscopic pores. That's not a flaw; it's how brick manages moisture. Brick takes water in and lets it back out as conditions change. The whole system — brick, mortar, the air gap behind veneer, the weep holes at the base — is designed around the idea that water will get in and needs a way to get out.

A pressure washer breaks that deal. Normal rain hits the wall at essentially zero pressure — it runs down the face, some absorbs, most sheds off. A pressure washer drives water into the pores at hundreds or thousands of PSI, far deeper than rain ever reaches, and forces it through joints that rain would never penetrate. The wall can't dry that water out on any normal timeline. It sits in there — in the brick, in the mortar, in the cavity behind the veneer — for days or weeks.

And water that sits inside masonry does three kinds of damage. First, freeze damage. Texas doesn't freeze often, but it freezes hard when it does — February 2021 put single-digit temperatures across the whole state. Water inside brick expands about nine percent when it freezes. That expansion has to go somewhere, and it goes into the pore structure of the brick and the bond of the mortar. One hard freeze on a saturated wall can do more damage than a decade of normal weather. A wall that was pressure-washed in the fall and never fully dried is a wall at maximum vulnerability when the Arctic air arrives.

Second, salt damage. Brick and mortar contain soluble salts. Water moving through the masonry dissolves those salts and carries them toward the surface. When the water evaporates, the salts crystallize — and salt crystals growing inside a pore exert tremendous pressure, the same mechanism that breaks up concrete and stone. This is subflorescence, the hidden version of the efflorescence you see on the surface, and it's one of the main engines of spalling. Every unnecessary soaking of the wall feeds this cycle.

Third, the cavity problem. On a brick veneer house — which is most of Texas — there's an air space between the brick and

the wood-frame wall behind it. That space has weep holes at the bottom so incidental moisture can drain out. A pressure washer can overwhelm that system: it drives so much water through the veneer, so fast, that the cavity floods faster than the weeps can drain it. Now the water is sitting against your sheathing, your house wrap, your insulation. In a Texas summer, that trapped moisture becomes a mold farm inside a wall you can't see into. The homeowner thinks the house got a nice cleaning. Inside the wall, it's raining.

This is the deep reason behind the whole book's message. It's not just that high pressure chips the mortar — though it does. It's that high pressure defeats the moisture-management design of the entire wall assembly. Brick is a raincoat, not a submarine. Treat it like a raincoat: clean the surface, let the chemistry work, rinse gently, and let the wall do what it was designed to do.

Chapter 9: Patios, Driveways, Retaining Walls

— The Other Masonry

The house walls get all the attention, but most properties have more masonry taking abuse: the brick patio, the concrete driveway, the retaining wall holding up the flower bed, the brick mailbox at the curb. These are horizontal or ground-contact masonry, and they live even harder lives than the walls — they hold standing water, they take foot traffic and car tires, and they sit in the splash zone for every rainstorm.

The good news: flat concrete and pavers can take more pressure than a brick wall. Driveways and concrete patios are routinely cleaned at 2,000 to 3,000 PSI, and that's appropriate — concrete is a different material, poured thick, with no mortar joints to protect. Brick patios and brick pavers are the middle ground: the brick units themselves can usually handle moderate pressure, but the sand or mortar joints between them cannot take a direct blast. Wash a brick patio with a narrow nozzle and you'll excavate the joint sand and leave the pavers rocking. Use a surface-cleaner

attachment — the spinning disc that holds a fixed distance and spreads the pressure evenly — and keep it moving. It's the single best tool for flat masonry because it eliminates the stripes and etching that come from an unsteady hand on a wand.

Retaining walls deserve special caution. A brick or stone retaining wall is holding back soil and water pressure from behind. Its weep holes and drainage are structural — they relieve the hydrostatic pressure that would otherwise push the wall over. Blasting a retaining wall with high pressure can clog or damage the weep holes, erode the joints on the exposed face, and — on a wall that's already marginal — the vibration and water loading isn't doing it any favors. Clean retaining walls gently, from the top down, and if the wall is leaning, bowing, or losing joints, that's a structural evaluation, not a cleaning job.

The mailbox is the one I get called about most, which surprises people until they think about it: the brick mailbox sits at the curb, in the full sun, getting hit by the sprinkler every morning and the weed whacker every weekend. It's the most abused small masonry structure on most properties. Wash it gently — it's a small structure with a lot of joint area

relative to its size, and the mortar takes a beating. And check the cap: most brick mailboxes have a concrete or stone cap, and if that cap has cracked, water is running straight down into the column. A tube of masonry caulk on a cracked mailbox cap is a five-dollar repair that prevents a five-hundred-dollar rebuild.

One more: the chimney. Your brick chimney above the roofline gets washed when the house gets washed, and it's the worst possible place for pressure damage — it's the oldest mortar on the house, the most weathered, the hardest to inspect, and the most expensive to repair. Tell your wash company to go easy on the chimney, or better, to soft-wash it only. I've repointed too many chimneys where the newest damage was clearly a pressure-washer signature — clean stripes carved through the joints, right where the wand stopped and started.

Chapter 10: The Questions Everybody Asks

After fifty years, I've heard every version of these. Here are the straight answers.

"Can I just use my pressure washer on the low setting?" If it genuinely goes down to the 500–800 PSI range with a wide fan nozzle, yes. Most consumer machines bottom out around 1,000–1,500 PSI even on "low," which is higher than ideal but workable if you keep your distance — eighteen inches minimum — and keep the nozzle moving. If your machine only has one aggressive setting, use the garden hose instead. The hose with a good spray nozzle and the right chemical will clean brick just fine. The machine is optional; the chemistry is not.

"Will bleach hurt my brick?" Properly diluted, applied to pre-wet brick, and rinsed thoroughly — no. Bleach is the industry-standard organic killer for masonry and has been for decades. What hurts brick is letting strong bleach dry on the surface, using it on dry brick so it absorbs deep, or mixing it with acids. Follow the method in Chapter 6 and the brick won't know the difference — but the algae will.

"What about those 'wet and forget' spray-on products?"

The spray-and-leave products work — slowly, over weeks and months — on organic growth. They're fine for maintenance between real cleanings. They're not a substitute for a proper wash when the wall is genuinely grimy, and they don't remove mineral stains or efflorescence. Think of them as touch-up, not treatment.

"My neighbor's house was pressure washed and it looks great. Why can't I?" It probably does look great — today. The damage from over-pressuring doesn't show up in the "after" photo. It shows up in eighteen months when the joints start shedding, or in three years when the brick faces start spalling, or the first time a hard freeze hits a saturated wall. You're not seeing the bill; you're seeing the receipt for the bill. Ask that neighbor again in two years.

"How do I know if a previous wash damaged my wall?"

Run your finger along a mortar joint and press. Sound mortar is hard — you can't dent it with a fingernail. Damaged mortar is crumbly, sandy, recessed. Look at the joints in raking light — early morning or late afternoon sun across the wall — and you'll see every irregularity: washed-out joints show as shadows, etched brick shows as texture change. Compare a

washed area to an unwashed area (behind the bushes, under the eaves) — if the washed brick looks "cleaner" but also rougher, with more aggregate showing, the washer took surface with the dirt.

"Should I seal the brick after washing?" If the wall is sound, a breathable silane/siloxane water repellent is a good investment — it goes on clean dry brick, keeps rain out of the pores, and makes the next cleaning easier because grime can't grip as well. What you should never do is seal a wall that's holding moisture — fresh off a heavy wash, or with known water intrusion — because you'll trap the moisture inside. Let the wall dry for several days of dry weather first. And never use a film-forming sealer, paint, or anything that creates a vapor barrier on the outside of the wall. The wall has to breathe.

"Is it okay to wash in the summer heat?" You can, but work early morning, work in sections, and never let the chemical dry on the wall. Texas summer sun will bake a bleach solution dry in minutes on a west-facing wall, and dried chemical leaves residue and can discolor. Fall and spring are the better seasons — cooler, and the wall dries at a sane pace.

Chapter 11: After the Wash — Sealing, Repointing, and What the Clean Wall Tells You

A freshly washed brick wall is a diagnostic opportunity. With the grime gone, you can see the masonry honestly for the first time in years. Walk it before the week is out and look at it with fresh eyes.

What you're looking for: joints that are recessed, crumbling, or missing — the wash may have exposed deterioration that was hiding under the grime, or the wash itself may have caused it (if you hired the wrong guy, you'll know now). Spalled or flaking brick faces. Efflorescence that the wash didn't remove — remember, that's a water problem wearing a cosmetic disguise. Cracks, especially stair-step cracks that suggest movement. And anywhere water is getting in: failed caulk around windows, bad flashing, sprinklers hitting the wall.

If the joints need work, do the repointing AFTER the wash, not before — you want the mason working on a clean wall so the new mortar bonds and matches properly. If the wall is

sound, consider a breathable water repellent — a silane or siloxane sealer — applied to the clean, dry brick. This is the right time for it: the product penetrates best on clean masonry, and it keeps the next round of rain and algae from getting a foothold. What you don't want is a film-forming sealer or paint — anything that traps moisture inside the wall. (If you're thinking about painting the brick instead, there's a whole book in this library on why you should read it first — the short version is that paint on brick is a moisture trap with a twenty-year bill attached.)

How often to wash after this: let the wall tell you. When the north side starts going green again, or the curb appeal drops, it's time. For most Texas brick homes, that's every two to three years. Wash gently, wash only when needed, and every wash is a chance to catch the small problems before they become my problems.

The brick on your house will outlive all of us if it's treated right. It's the most forgiving building material ever made — it just asks for two things: keep the water managed, and don't blast it with a machine that was designed to strip paint off concrete. Do those two things and you'll never need the repair chapters of this book. And if you ever do need masonry work — cleaning, restoration, or repair — that's what my crew does every day. You'll find the rest of the library at the [free brick

repair books](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>)
page, and the [Brick Industry Association on
cleaning](<https://www.gobrick.com>) publishes the technical guidance
the whole industry works from. For hands-on [brick cleaning and
restoration](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) in the DFW area, that's
my day job — fifty years of it.

Chapter 12: The Fifty-Year View

I've been in this trade since before pressure washers were a consumer product. When I started, you cleaned a brick wall with a bucket, a brush, and whatever detergent was under the sink, and nobody thought that was primitive — it was just how it was done. Then the machines got cheap, the rental yards started stocking them, and somewhere along the way "cleaning" became synonymous with "blasting." An entire generation of homeowners grew up believing that more pressure means more clean.

It doesn't. It never did. The chemistry cleans; the water rinses. That was true when I was an apprentice and it's true now, and every advancement in this business — the soft-wash systems, the surfactants, the proprietary masonry cleaners — has been about getting better chemistry so you need less pressure, not more.

Here's what fifty years has taught me about brick: it's the most honest building material there is. It tells you exactly how it's been treated. A wall that's been washed gently for thirty years looks thirty years old in the best way — settled,

sound, every joint tight. A wall that's been blasted every other year looks tired before its time — joints receding, faces rough, the whole wall aging in dog years. You can read a brick wall's history the way you'd read a man's face.

So this is my ask, and it's the reason this book exists: the next time the green film comes back on the north wall — and it will come back, that's what north walls do — reach for the pump sprayer before you reach for the pressure washer. Give the chemical ten minutes. Rinse gently. And if you'd rather hire it out, hire the company that talks about dwell time and surfactants, not the one bragging about his machine's PSI.

Your brick will outlive you if you let it. That's not sentiment — it's the engineering. A fired clay brick is good for a century or more. The only thing standing between your brick and its second fifty years is the person holding the wand. Make sure that person — whether it's you or somebody you hired — understands that the goal is a clean wall, not a conquered one.

About the Author

Travis Nech has spent 50 years in Texas brick, masonry, and foundation work. He owns [Champion Brick

Repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) — (817) 900-6324 — [Metro Foundation Repair](<https://metrofoundationrepair.com>) — (817) 670-4474 — and the [LintelLOCK](<https://lintlerepair.com>) lintel system — (469) 730-0650. All his books are free at [Travis Nech's Free Book Library](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>).