



GUIDE SHEET

POINTING WITH LIME

Lime putty mortars offer advantages over cement based mortars. They are generally softer and more porous, allowing moisture to evaporate from the joints in preference to the bricks. This will help to lower moisture levels in the wall and reduce the build up of soluble salts in the wall face. As with all lime putty based materials the best outcome requires patience and careful control of drying and suction, the reward being a good looking and long lasting mortar.

Preparation:

Any existing defective pointing must be raked out to a depth usually equal to twice the width of the joint, but not less than 15mm. The back of the joint should be roughly square in profile. Plugging chisels ensure that the stone or bricks aren't forced apart.

Dampening:

The joints must be thoroughly dampened, with enough time left for the brick faces to dry to prevent smearing. The mortar should be as dry as it is practicable to point with. This allows maximum compaction in the joint, reduces shrinkage cracking and reduces the tendency to smear on the brick faces.

'Knocking Up':

All lime mortars benefit from being 'knocked up' (i.e. by tipping the lime out of its container onto a board, and mixing thoroughly) prior to use to plasticise them - this reduces shrinkage in the mortar.

Gauging:

Lime mortars harden by carbonation i.e. reacting with carbon dioxide from the air. In damp, frost prone or very exposed situations it may be appropriate to add an extra ingredient to a lime mortar to increase its compressive strength and frost resistance. Traditionally volcanic ash or brick dust were added, these are forms of burnt clay called pozzolans after the Italian town of Pozzuoli where volcanic ash was used by the Romans. We offer a calcined clay from Cornwall called Metastar, to be used at a volume gauge of 10 -25% depending on degree of exposure. It should only be added when knocking up the mortar just prior to use. It won't give an overnight set but will speed up the overall setting process.

Pointing:

Start at the top of a wall to allow for cleaning up and spraying to continue. Use a pointing key or metal spatula and force the mortar in from a hawk. Joints deeper than 20mm will need an initial dubbing out as shrinkage can occur otherwise. Finish flush or rebate a little if the joints have widened with age or for personal preference as rebating highlights the stone more.

Brushing:

When the mortar is "green hard", brush or tamp the joints to enhance the aggregate and give a coarser texture to the pointing.

Protection:

In common with all lime products, lime mortar should not be used if there is any risk of a frost occurring before the mortar has thoroughly hardened.

External pointing should be mist sprayed to control drying and protected from direct sun and wind. In winter it should be protected from rain and light frost. Hessian cloth is recommended.

Quantities:

A 21kg tub of lime mortar will point approximately 2 square metres of brickwork.

Safety:

Limes are caustic. Always wear eye protection and protective gloves and clothing and follow the safety instructions on the labels.

Our advice and information are given in good faith. It is important that users satisfy themselves that they've chosen an appropriate product and have a suitably skilled workforce.