



DEPAVING

What is it?

Depaving – which falls under the umbrella of [‘tactical urbanism’](#) (aka ‘guerrilla urbanism’) – is about removing sections of hard outdoor surfacing (pavement, concrete or tarmac) and re-greening: reintroducing soil and green life. It is typically a community-driven movement that empowers people to change both their own spaces (such as driveways) and public areas such as [parking lot](#) or [road island](#).

Why depave?

Depaving is an easy way to replace concreted areas with soil and plant life. Not only is this a great way to improve the aesthetic appearance of these spaces but has wide-ranging benefits for the environment. Depaving allows rainwater to soak into the ground, helping to replenish groundwater supplies and reduce the risk of flooding. It can also enhance air quality, reduce noise pollution, provide a habitat for wildlife and provide ambient cooling of the area (for a number of reasons, including shade, evapotranspiration of rain on leaves, and reducing the [‘heat island effect’](#)). For participants and local residents, the act of depaving and its green legacy can improve social cohesion and mental health.

How do I start?

Useful guides

- [Depaving the World](#). A frank introduction by Richard Register, founder of EcoCity Builders.
- [How to Depave](#). Thorough advice on site planning, breaking ground and aftercare.
- [Grey to Green Guide](#). Especially useful for the UK, with tips on funding and planning permission.

Depaving your driveway

- [Depaving a driveway](#) so you can still park cars. This is more inspiration than a hands-on guide (they used a [professional team](#)).

Depaving a public space

You’ll need to think about:

- Recruiting and managing your community of depaving volunteers
- Getting planning permission from the landowner (whether private or municipal)
- Sourcing funding
- Designing the space (you may want to hire a local [landscape architect](#))
- Materials (both tools and natural materials) required, and their costs
- Method and costs of excavating the existing surface
- A plan for aftercare and maintenance going forward

Communities: [Depave Paradise](#) (Canada) | [Depave](#) (Portland, Oregon) | [Green Grounds](#) (LA, California)

Inspiration

- Check out [this incredible TED talk](#) by guerrilla gardener Ron Finlay.
- [The Pothole Gardener](#) flips a negative to a positive: planting mini-gardens in urban potholes.