



Natural Stone

Care Guide

Caring for Natural Stone

Like so many of Mother Nature's creations, every piece of natural stone is unique. So each natural stone countertop, vanity, wall or floor is distinctive and matchless. Beyond the appearance of natural stone, this distinctive characteristic also applies to the geological characteristic of stone, which most often determines the care recommendations for a particular stone.



An Ounce of Protection Equals a Pound of Cure

People often assume stone is "stain proof." However, all stone is porous to some degree. Natural stone should receive the same attention given to fine wood. Coasters should be placed under glasses, particularly those containing alcohol or citrus juices. Many common foods and drinks contain acid. Marble is an alkaline material and acid will eat into or "etch" the stone. Spills of any type should be wiped up immediately. Hot plates should be used under heated dishes. Placemats or felt bottoms should be placed under china, ceramics, silver and furniture to prevent scratching of the marble. Keeping a small rug or welcome mat near entries will help to capture dirt from normal foot traffic which is abrasive on the marble surface. Generally, this type of attention will save a great deal of time spent on other cures. With normal preventative maintenance, stains and scratches should be minimal.



The purpose of this booklet is to suggest precautions and corrective measures to keep your stone beautiful. The cleaning methods described in this booklet are safe for most natural stones but may damage other materials. Consult a professional if you are unsure.

Protecting Your Natural Stone

Sealers are effective, but not infallible. They are designed to minimize stains, but not to entirely prevent them. The purpose of sealers is to prevent as many staining agents as possible from penetrating the pores of the stone or terrazzo. If the stain does not remain at or near the surface of the stone, it will be much more difficult to remove. Remember, once sealers are applied, they will usually need to be maintained. Depending on the sealer, some will need to be stripped or re-applied more regularly than others.

Sealers, similar to cleaners, should be pH Balanced or neutral. Some sealers may be approved for ceramic or wood, but this does not mean that they are safe for natural stone. If the sealer is acidic, it may be damaging to the stone's surface. Chemicals high in acid will break down the mineral calcium carbonate, which is the building block of marble.

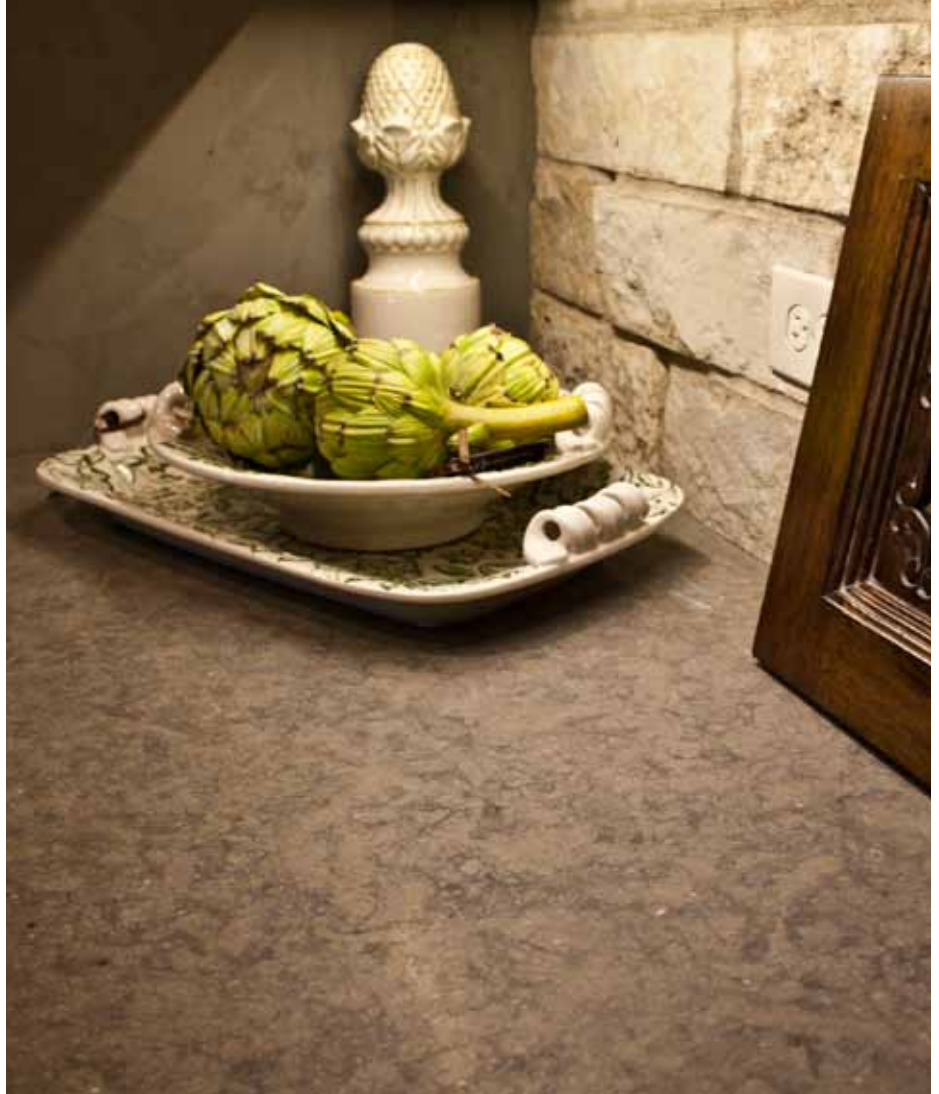
Sealers are offered with a water or solvent "base". The sealer base acts as a carrier for the chemicals that actually seal the stone such as urethane, silicone or acrylic. Water-based sealers are "user-friendly" and typically easier to use than solvent based sealers. Solvent-based sealers are usually longer lasting, but most need to be applied by a qualified contractor. Consult a professional for the appropriate sealer specific to your needs.

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Water-Based Sealers

Most water-based sealers can be used by the homeowner or end-users such as maintenance crews. Water-based sealers typically remain at or near the surface of the stone because the water “base” does not allow the sealing agents to deeply penetrate the stone’s pores. Therefore, water-based sealers are generally easier to remove and most effective when used as a regular maintenance tool to protect your natural stone or terrazzo. Water-based sealers may provide stain protection from three months to three years. Factors such as heavy foot traffic and lack of regular cleaning can reduce the time between necessary applications. Sealers with a water base are usually more environmentally friendly compared to solvent-based sealers.

Water-based sealers are intended primarily for protection against staining. However, many people are also concerned with how the sealer will look when it is dry. The following are examples of sealers which have a water base, but the finishes will be different when they dry. Both sealers will protect natural stone and terrazzo from minor staining and often contain similar chemicals which act as the sealing agent. Therefore, choosing the appropriate sealer for the job is basically a matter of personal preference as to which finish is more desired by the end user when the sealer dries.



1. Urethane or acrylic polymers are sealing agents that typically dry to a high-gloss finish and will make the stone’s surface look polished. High-luster sealers are often good for application over commercially installed marble or terrazzo. High-gloss water-based sealers such as [Stoneteck High Gloss Finishing Sealer](#) can be excellent for marble or terrazzo that has been installed for several years and has lost its natural luster. A couple coats of a water-based glossy sealer can revitalize the shiny appearance. Keep in mind, glossy water based sealers typically require a regular maintenance program & will need to be reapplied periodically to maintain a consistent level of shine. One possible glossy water-based sealer is [Terroxy WB Acrylic](#). [Terroxy WB Urethane Sealer](#) can reveal the naturally rich color of a particular stone or terrazzo surface, but this sealer is suggested to be applied by a contractor familiar with using this product as once applied, this sealer is difficult to remove.

2. Some water-based sealers are intended to penetrate the surface and cure (dry) without altering the stone or terrazzo’s finish (either polished or honed for example). These sealers are excellent for both new and existing applications where protection against potential staining agents is the primary goal. The existing finish will not be altered by the application of a sealer. Although some color enhancing affects may be experienced particularly on matte, honed or textured finishes where the material’s natural color are particularly muted. Perfect for most polished, honed or unfinished marble, limestone, slate, terrazzo or quarry tile. Water-based impregnating sealers typically provide lasting protection and can be reapplied as needed.

[T&M Resinated Stone Sealer](#) & [StoneTech Heavy Duty Water Based Stone Sealer](#) are two relatively user-friendly water-based sealers. [StoneTech Bulletproof Water Based Sealer](#) is a great choice for more porous materials such as limestone, travertine, slate and marble.

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Solvent-Based Sealers

Solvent-based sealers, sometimes termed “impregnators”, allow the sealing agents to deeply penetrate the stone’s pores. Because solvent additives permit the sealing agents to impregnate the surface, they typically protect the stone’s surface longer and they do not need to be reapplied as often as water-based sealers. Like water-based sealers, many solvent-based sealers also contain urethane or acrylic as the actual sealing agent. However, the solvent additive will carry the agents beneath the surface of the stone, whereas water-based sealers typically remain topical. The sealing agents can “dig” and “grab” the stone’s surface better using a solvent base as the carrier instead of water. (It is usually best to have a qualified contractor apply solvent-based sealers). If the sealer needs to be removed, solvent-based sealers are usually more difficult to strip than water based sealers because the sealing agents bond to pores well below the stone’s surface. Avoid using solvent-based sealers where, for example, food is present or people are unable to leave the area while the solvent base is drying, such as a hospital.

Solvent-based sealers are available for different purposes. In general, this booklet discusses two solvent-based formulas and applications where these particular sealers might be desired. Many other formulas exist; however, the following are widely used for natural stone and terrazzo. The first is mainly for protection. The second is for protection as well as adding luster or shine to the surface.



1. The first type of solvent-based sealer is intended mainly for lasting protection without changing the natural finish of the stone. Primarily designed to retain or match the finish of whatever stone you are applying the sealer over while protecting the stone from minor stains. This type of solvent-based impregnator is not designed to leave a high-gloss or polished appearance. For example, application over polished marble will generally remain polished and application over honed limestone will generally remain honed. The sealer virtually disappears when it dries, rather than leaving a high-gloss or polished finish. The purpose of most solvent-based sealers is to impregnate and seal the pores of the stone while maintaining the original finish desired by the end-user.

Side effects can exist. Certain solvent-based penetrating sealers may darken the stone. Although they may not affect the finish of the stone, they may affect the “tone” or color. Solvent-based sealers commonly reject minor staining longer than water-based sealers because the sealing agents are below the surface and protected from foot traffic wear. Re-application will be necessary, however less often than water-based sealers. This type of solvent-based sealer is effective on new kitchen and vanity tops where staining agents are readily available and need to be repelled. Check with the product’s manufacturer to obtain a better understanding of the sealer’s intended results. [T&M Penetrating Seal #101](#) and [Stonetech Impregnator Pro](#) are a few of many solvent-based impregnating sealers designed to protect natural stone against staining without changing the desired natural finish.

2. The second type of solvent-based sealer is designed not only to protect, but also to leave a high-luster finish. The solvent base allows the sealing agents to penetrate beneath the surface and dry to a shiny finish due to acrylic or urethane additives. An acrylic or urethane solvent-based sealer is generally not intended for use over new natural stone installations. New polished marble and granite appear shiny because the natural pores (or openings) on the surface are virtually closed. It is difficult for high-gloss solvent-based sealers to penetrate the stone’s surface since the pores are very small. Thus, the sealer remains predominantly topical and can even puddle if too much sealer is used. Improper use of this product can result in streaking which will be difficult to remove when dry. This type of solvent-based sealer is better for natural stone or terrazzo that has been installed for many years and needs a good high-gloss “facelift”. This type of solvent based sealer will provide a fresh looking polish to old stone or terrazzo in addition to a “hardshell” protective coating. This sealer is suggested for qualified contractor use only and may need to be reapplied periodically to maintain an even shine. One of several solvent-based high-gloss sealers is [Terroxy SB Acrylic](#).

Note: Apply solvent-based sealers sparingly. Streaks are very difficult to remove once solvent-based sealers are dry. It is best to consult product distributor or a qualified contractor before use.

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Regular Cleaning

The way to keep your new or old stone lovely is to keep it clean! Remember the old saying, “An Ounce of Prevention equals a Pound of Cure.” If natural stone is given the proper care, the stone should sustain its beauty and durability. Most commonly, unless regular cleaning is done, ordinary dust particles in the air can settle on your marble and can be ground in to the surface by normal foot traffic. These specs of dust will slowly remove the natural polish on the stone’s surface. The use of a non-oil dust mop on a regular basis should help prolong the finish of your stone. Natural stone should be washed regularly with fresh warm water and a clean, non-abrasive cloth. Adding a neutral (pH balanced) cleaner will help to remove topical dirt and grime*. Avoid detergents that can be abrasive and contain chemicals high in acid or alkaline. These chemicals can “etch” or remove the natural polish on the stone’s surface. Some stone cleaners have a petroleum or animal fat base which may alter the appearance of your stone. Petroleum (or oils such as animal fat) can darken natural stone and leave a residue which over time can buildup and turn yellow. This buildup is usually difficult to remove. Be sure to use a cleaner which does not have a petroleum or oil base and contains chemicals that will be safe on the finish of your natural stone floor or countertop. Terrazzo & Marble Supply Companies’ [Neutral Cleaner #107](#) is one of several safe cleaners for natural stone and terrazzo. [StoneTech Revitalizer](#) is a great product for every day cleaning. Available in a convenient spray and hand wipes, this product also contains trace amounts of sealer which adds protection in addition to every day cleaning properties. For heavy duty cleaning of natural stone & terrazzo, try [Stone-Tech Klenz All](#) which can provide added results on medium to heavy cleaning projects. Klenz All will act as a sealer remover if used undiluted as a cleaner, material will need to be resealed once material is dried.

*A neutral cleaner is designed for regular use and is not necessarily for removing deep-seated dirt or stains. (See section on stain removal for more information).

Stains and Stain Removal

Natural stone has been installed for hundreds of years without a sealer and much of it continues to look beautiful. Although new technology has allowed us to minimize staining by using various sealers, one thing should be clear to you regarding the stainability of stone. Most natural stone is “stainable” given the right amount of time and a strong enough staining agent; however, the rate at which a particular stone absorbs foreign matter (the “porosity” of the stone), can vary. Some natural stones are less porous and resist staining better than others. Granites, for example, are typically more stain resistant than most marbles and might be more suitable for kitchen or commercial areas. These applications are typically exposed to more products that can cause staining. Use some of the preventative practices outlined in this booklet to prevent as many stains as possible. However, if staining does occur, begin with some of the suggestions described in the “Regular Cleaning” section of this booklet. If the stain persists, contact your local fabricator or stone supplier for professional recommendations.



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Caution Regarding Natural Stone Maintenance Products

This booklet is only a guide. Always try a test patch. Directions on products are more specific and must be followed carefully. We suggest that you call a professional if you are unsure of a particular product. Do not try a product that may further damage your natural stone.



For more information regarding the Natural Stone Care & Maintenance line available from T&M, contact the Contractor Sales Department of your local T&M branch.



Wheeling, IL - 800.7.MARBLE

| Farmington Hills, MI - 248.476.2711

| Golden Valley, MN - 763.544.3333

