



SOUTHGATE
HOMES

A GREEN BRICK PARTNER

Care & Maintenance Guide

NATURAL AND ENGINEERED STONE

Get To Know Your Stone

Congratulations on your new countertops! To keep them looking their best, it's essential to understand their natural characteristics and follow the proper care and maintenance guidelines.

The first step in proper stone care and maintenance is to understand your stone's geological classification and composition. This information will help you to identify what cleaning products to use and how best to care for your natural stone.

Natural stone is categorized into three basic geological classifications by their respective formation process: Sedimentary, Metamorphic, and Igneous. Additionally, stones in each category can be either Calcareous or Siliceous.

CALCAREOUS STONE

Calcareous stone is composed mainly of calcium carbonate, a chemical compound commonly found in natural stone, shells, and pearls. Calcium Carbonate is sensitive to acidic solutions so mild, non- acidic cleaners are recommended.

SILICEOUS STONE

Siliceous stone, as the term implies, is composed primarily of silicates, such as quartz, feldspar, mica, etc. As such, a siliceous stone is generally resistant to most acids found in kitchen settings, although acidic cleaners are still not recommended, as these stones may contain trace levels of minerals that are acid sensitive.

Stone Colors and Appearances

Natural stone is quarried throughout the world in a variety of colors and varying mineral compositions. In most cases, the type of natural stone can be identified by visible particles at the surface of the stone. The following tips may be helpful:



MARBLES are traditionally prized for their aesthetic appeal. Some are accentuated by pronounced veining and bold colors. Often included in the marble family are serpentines and onyxes. Marbles are extremely sensitive to acidic substances.



GRANITES typically exhibit small flecks or grains of minerals uniformly distributed throughout the stone. Some “exotic granites” will have veining patterns like marbles.



SANDSTONES vary widely in color due to different minerals and clays found in the stone. Sandstone is typically light gray to yellow, or red. Bluestone and brownstone are well known varieties of this quartz- based stone group.



LIMESTONE AND TRAVERTINE are widely used building stones with colors typically light gray, tan or buff. A distinguishing characteristic of many limestones is the presence of fossils that are frequently visible in the stone surface.



SOAPSTONE may come in a wide range of colors and generally has a smooth feel to the touch. Due to its high resistance to chemicals and because of its ability to absorb and distribute heat, it is an ideal material for countertops. It’s important to know that this material ages and darkens over time.



ENGINEERED STONE is made from a combination of crushed quartz/ marble and resin, generally in a 90% to 10% ratio, roughly. Quartz, although both man-made, contain part or all of the same characteristics as natural stone since they are mostly made from natural stone components. In the event these tops are damaged, the resin makes this type of material extremely difficult to repair. Quartz can still be stained and be etched. Engineered stone is manufactured under a controlled process, but color variance can still occur. Small specs of darker quartz can be found in lighter color selections sometimes. Lighter specs could be found in darker color.

There are several stone finishes (for example: polished, honed, and leathered) available for natural stone. The type of finish will not impact the type of cleaning product used.

Cleaning Natural Stones

All natural stone products are subject to damage if not cared for properly. For normal housekeeping, clean using warm water and/or a PH balanced neutral stone cleaner on a regular basis to remove residue from everyday spills such as food, hairspray, cosmetics and even sitting water.



NATURAL STONE CARE DOS	NATURAL STONE CARE DON'TS
Clean stone surfaces with a neutral cleaner (soap designed for stone) with warm water.	Don't use vinegar, bleach, ammonia, tub and tile cleaners or general-purpose bathroom cleaners.
Like any item in your home, an excessive concentration of cleaner or soap may leave a film and cause streaks. Follow manufacturer's recommendations.	Don't use abrasive cleaners such as dry cleaners (scouring powders and creams).
Use a soft cloth for best results.	Don't use alkaline cleaners not specifically formulated for stone.
Rinse the surface thoroughly after washing with soap solution and dry with a soft cloth.	Don't use commercially available rust removers (laundry rust stain removers, toilet bowl cleaners). They could contain trace levels of hydrofluoric acid (HF). This acid attacks silicates in addition to other minerals. All stones, including granite and quartzite, will be damaged if exposed to HF.
Change the rinse water frequently.	Don't mix ammonia and bleach. This combination creates a toxic and lethal gas.

There are various cleaning products out there to choose from. Many of them claim to be designed for stone. Do your homework and read the ingredients carefully. Some of these products may cause more harm than good and degrade your sealer.

Easy Care Tips

To get the longest life and preserve the beauty of your natural stone, follow these simple tips:

SEALING	<p>Your countertops are purchased sealed. Sealing is a common step taken on some stones as an extra precaution against staining. In fact, the sealing products used in the stone industry are “impregnators” which do not actually seal the stone, but more correctly act as a repellent rather than a sealer.</p> <p>Sealing does not make stone stain proof; rather it makes the stone more stain resistant. Sealers should be reapplied periodically (usually every six months to once a year-depending on how porous the material is - the lighter the color - the more porous it is.) Use only sealer made for natural stone.</p>
COASTERS	<p>Use coasters under glasses, particularly those containing alcohol, soda, and citrus juices. Acidic drinks IN the glass or cup that are simply “sweating” can etch the stone and leave a ring mark. The drink’s residue from the acidic liquid collects on the outside of the glass and then condensation mixes with it and carries it down to the countertop surface where the etching begins. It happens in mere seconds and cannot be prevented, except by not allowing contact by using coasters.</p>
TRIVETS	<p>While many stones can withstand heat, the use of trivets or mats is recommended.</p>
SPILLS	<p>Blot the spill with a paper towel immediately. Don’t wipe the area, it will spread the spill. Flush the area with water and mild soap and rinse several times. Dry the area thoroughly with a soft cloth. Repeat and be sure to rinse off soap so that it doesn’t become a thin layer of film/residue.</p>

Stain Identification Tips

Identifying the type of stain on the stone surface is the key to removing it. Stains can be oil based, organic, metallic, biological, ink based, paint based, and acid based. Sometimes they can even be caused by water. A white powder that may appear on the surface, efflorescence, is caused by the deposition of mineral salts carried by water. If you don’t know what caused the stain, consider likely staining agents that may have been present (for example: plants, food, cosmetics). Check the color, shape, and pattern of the stain.

Stain Removal Steps

Surface stains can be removed by cleaning with an appropriate cleaning product or household chemical. Industry professionals also use poultice to absorb stains. Go to www.marble-institute.com/poultice or call an expert countertop care professional.

Taking Care of Quartz

One of the great things about engineered quartz is an easy-care surface perfect for modern life. The high-quality mix of quartz and resin allows the material to have a minimal maintenance routine. Taking care of your countertops doesn't take long and will enhance your enjoyment of the stone.

For everyday care, we recommend simple warm water and a cloth. Clean up all spills promptly! No surface is impervious to prolonged exposure to harsh chemicals or dyes. A Quartz surface is tough, but only if treated well. Avoid leaving spilled red wine, tomato products, lemons and soda on surfaces for prolonged periods. These can cause stains and etching if left untreated.



DO NOT USE abrasive cleaners!

Dry abrasive cleaners can damage the finish when used to scour the surface. This includes cleaners like Comet, Soft Scrub, and Ajax. Also, avoid using Scotch Brite or scouring pads that contain Aluminum Oxide. Using these damages the countertop and makes it susceptible to damage.

Be sure to use trivets and potholders when placing hot pots and pans on Maestro Quartz. If subjected to intense temperature changes, there is a risk of thermal expansion and cracking.

Although Quartz is one of the hardest substances, you should never use your countertop as a cutting board. Depending on your knives, you risk scratching the surface or dulling your blades!

Quartz never has to be sealed after fabrication. With proper cleaning, you can enjoy a lifetime of use from your countertop.

Frequently Asked Questions

I HAVE HEARD THAT GRANITE HAS SMALL CRACKS AND PITS IN IT. WHAT ARE THESE?

Fissures occur naturally in many stone types. The term “fissure” is used commercially in the stone industry to describe a visible separation along inter-crystalline boundaries. This separation may start and stop within the face of the stone or extend through an edge. A fissure differs from a crack in that it is a naturally occurring feature of the stone. ALL granites contain some degree of fissure. Some contain more than others. Since fissures occur naturally in all granites, they are not considered a flaw. Countertops will not be replaced due to the presence of fissures. Pitting of the countertop surface, particularly in granite, is a commonly seen characteristic of natural stone. Granites are made up of several different minerals, each mineral having a different hardness.

Granites contain Quartz, Feldspar, Biotite, Amphibole, ferrous titanium oxides, and other mineral combinations. On the Mohs scale, diamonds are the hardest mineral with a rating of 10. Quartz and Feldspar have a hardness of 6.5 - 7 and are very durable. Biotite (small, black minerals found through the slab) on the other hand are very soft (2.5) and can flake easily. All true granites have Biotite in their composition. Because Biotite is relatively soft and flaky, the first few layers can be removed during the polishing process. The pits do not make the granite less durable or otherwise inferior, and do not in themselves qualify a slab for replacement. Pits are common in all granites and should be expected when dealing with Natural Stone. Countertops will not be replaced due to pitting in the surface of any granite countertop.

MY GRANITE HAS VERY SMALL CHIPS ALONG THE SEAM. IS THIS NORMAL?

Chipping will occur, particularly in the igneous stone varieties, as a result of sawing operations. The exiting portion of the diamond blade used to cut granite will create many small chips. Larger chips may be repaired with epoxy or polyester resin if the completed repair is consistent in color and texture with the surrounding area.

I HAVE SEEN SOME SEAMS WHICH ARE NOT PERFECTLY SMOOTH, WHY IS THIS?

The term “lippage” as used in the stone industry, is the planar offset of the finished surfaces of two adjacent stone pieces. Due to the relatively tight seams used in countertop installations, even minor amounts of lippage are noticeable. Maximum lippage at the center of the countertop is 1/32” or 0.8mm. Countertops will not be replaced due to lippage within acceptable industry standards.

WHY DO MY COUNTERTOPS LOOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT FROM THE SAMPLE I WAS SHOWN?

All natural stone products are produced in nature, which can lead to fluctuation in color, pattern, veining and fissures. Expect color to vary from slab to slab and even within one slab. Color samples shown are to give an idea of a color range only and not to represent the complete shading, patterns, color variation, and texture that appear in the natural granite stone. For this reason, exact duplication cannot be guaranteed.

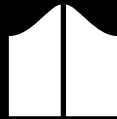
WHY IS THERE A SEAM IN MY COUNTERTOP AND WHY WAS IT PLACED WHERE IT IS?

Stones with wavy characteristics, streaks, movement or “veins” can be difficult to match or blend between corners and seams. During the natural stone slab planning and fabrication process, great care is taken to blend the patterns and match colors. At the discretion of the installing countertop company seams will be placed in the best location for structural integrity and visual aesthetics (within the limitation of the slab size). Note, the properties and characteristics that give granite such beauty also make it impossible to guarantee a match in pattern or color from one piece of countertop to the next. No replacement will be made for natural color variations within the countertop

Warranty Information

For Residential Natural Stone Countertops

WE PROVIDE A ONE (1) YEAR WARRANTY FROM THE DATE YOUR HOME CLOSES ON WORKMANSHIP ONLY	There is no warranty against shade variation, staining, scratching or wear on natural stone surfaces. All Countertops are sold “AS IS” condition and there are no warranties of any kind for natural stone. Normal housekeeping is the best way to maintain your granite. Clean your stone after each meal or countertop use. If a person cleans after each meal, there is very little possibility of ever staining the granite countertop. Clear warm water or a stone cleaner can be used to remove surface scum, food and/or any other deposits left on the surface. No other soaps, detergents, or cleaners should be used on the stone.
GREASE IS THE ENEMY	Of hazard to stone are oils, fats, grease, and products containing these types of items. Extra care should be taken to avoid products with grease residues being exposed to your natural stone for prolonged periods of time. Please avoid water and other liquids to puddle on the countertop surfaces, which could leave rings or other marks. (i.e. moisture from sweating glasses, and flowerpots, etc.)
YOUR COUNTERTOPS ARE SEALED WHEN YOU PURCHASE THEM	The purpose of a sealer is to increase stain resistance so that the natural stone repels dirt and water. The sealer penetrates the stone, thereby, reducing absorption of dirt and staining agents. Sealing will not eliminate all staining. Spills should be wiped off immediately to prevent stains from settling into the stone. It is recommended to apply sealers periodically. A sealer must be used made specifically for marble and granite. Use a type of sealer that is penetrating (invisible) and does not leave a film on the surface.
HEAVY WEIGHT CAN STRESS COUNTERTOPS	Natural stone is not a structural support product. Avoid placing heavy weight on the countertops and especially placing stress on the thin strips in front of the cook top and sink.



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