

## What is natural stone and how can I specify it in my projects?

**NATURAL STONE:** is the most beautiful material that can be used on a countertop, floor or wall. Each material has its own look and limitations, which must be understood prior to selecting. During this presentation, we will make recommendations for and against certain uses of stone. This comes from over 25 years of experience with natural stone and should be taken as such: our expert opinion. Any natural stone can be used for any interior residential installation, as long as the owner knows and accepts the inherent qualities and limitations of the material.

**Granite:** is an igneous material, meaning it is formed from ancient lava flows. It is incredibly hard and dense, with a hardness of 6-7 on the MOHS (measure of hardness scale) with diamond being a 10 and talc at 1. Granite is harder than steel, so you can cut on it but it will dull your knives. Granite also has a high heat resistance, and is not affected when you set a hot pot or plate on it. The shine of granite comes from the milling and polishing process using finer and finer grits of diamond abrasives. This is done in huge factories in the country of origin. The polish is not an applied topical coating and will not wear off from normal use. There are dozens of colors to choose; from very homogeneous patterns to wild variations in color and tone.

**Granite Uses:** Typically granite is used for kitchen countertops where acid and scratch resistance is an absolute.

**Marble:** is typically a calcium based, sedimentary material, formed underground from decaying plant and mineral life compounded under heat and pressure for millions of years. It is typically polished to a high shine and has an elegant look and quality to it. One way to remember the durability of marble is to remember this word association: marble is calcitic, so anything acidic will negatively affect it. Acidic things include wine, fruit juice, food; things you typically find in the kitchen. This is why we do not recommend marble for kitchens. It can be stained and permanently etched.

**Marble Uses:** Marble is good for interior entry and bathroom floors, shower walls, fireplace surrounds and countertops where food will not come into contact with it.

**Limestone:** very similar to marble in its formation and durability. Not recommended for kitchens. Limestone has a softer color palette than marble, and the variations are more subdued. Typically comes with a honed, or matte finish. Occasionally some materials are polished. Colors range from beige and tan to grey and dark brown. We even have a blue and rose limestone.

**Limestone Uses:** Limestone is good for entry and bathroom floors, shower walls, fireplace surrounds and countertops where food will not come into contact with it.

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**Travertine:** a cousin of limestone that is formed in underground pools of water. The physical makeup of travertine is similar to Swiss cheese. The holes in travertine are part of its charm, and are filled with cement or epoxy filler during the production process. Travertine is interesting in that it has a pattern like wood, and can be cut across the grain or with the grain; giving it very different looks. Most travertine comes honed; some are available with a polished finish.

**Travertine Uses:** Travertine is good for entry and bathroom floors, shower walls, fireplace surrounds and countertops where food will not come into contact with it. The great coliseums in Italy are made of travertine.

**Slate:** is an interesting material. It is sedimentary (made up of layers of material), but metamorphic as well (high heat from volcanic activity). It has a certain rustic charm like no other natural stone. It has a rough, textured finish and varies in thickness and size. It is mostly available in tile form, occasionally in slabs.

**Slate Uses:** Even though it is very durable as a flooring material indoor or out, it can be easily scratched; so we don't recommend it for countertops.

**Porphyry** is a textural term for an igneous rock (similar to granite) consisting of large-grained crystals such as feldspar or quartz dispersed in a fine-grained feldspathic matrix or groundmass.

The term "porphyry" is from Greek and means "purple". Purple was the color of royalty, and the "Imperial Porphyry" was a deep purple igneous rock with large crystals of plagioclase. The rock was the hardest known in antiquity <sup>[1]</sup> and was prized for monuments and building projects in Imperial Rome and later. However, not all porphyry stones are purple. Other variations in color include greenish brown, reddish-brown, violet grey, pinkish-brown, or pinkish green. Using porphyry stone enhances the looks and feel of a place by adding color, richness, and depth to it.

**Porphyry Uses:** Porphyry Pavers have an even yet textured surface that provides excellent traction even when wet. Additionally, with denseness similar to granite gives them a durability that far surpasses brick or travertine pavers. This makes porphyry stones perfect for driveways, walkways, pavements, boardwalks, and similar projects.

**Sealing stone:** it is our belief that all natural stone products should be sealed to protect them from staining. Sealers do NOT render the stone "stain proof"; they only slow down the staining process to give you time to clean whatever was spilled. There are different types of sealers for different applications. There are several types of sealers; invisible, color enhancing and wet look lacquer. We can assist you in choosing the best sealer during the material selection process.