

NATURAL STONE

Durable, Beautiful and Perfect for any Home

written by Brian Childers



Natural stone is a collective name for a variety of stone found throughout the world. The appearance and characteristics are dependent on the mineral content and manner in which the stone was formed. Varying geological conditions result in no two pieces of stone being exactly alike. Thanks to a robust supply, new technologies, and a growing appreciation for a virtually maintenance-free product that takes nature millions of years to create, there is a renaissance in the use of granite, marble, limestone, travertine, slate, onyx, and other members of the natural stone family in residential construction. From kitchens and baths to foyers and fireplaces, natural stone is becoming homeowners material of choice.

The types of natural stone which are used most commonly in residential application are formed by rivers, volcanoes and the formation and changing of mountains. These are granite, marble, limestone and slate. Before you choose a countertop, floor, backsplash or shower enclosure, be sure to know the benefits of each type of stone. Here are the basics:

Granite

Granite is an excellent choice for countertops. It can be polished to a high sheen or honed which is a beautiful matte finish. Granite is rated second on the "hardness" list next to diamond. This means it is extremely durable and with normal use resists chips, dings or breaks.

Granite is also heat resistant, so put away the trivets! A pot or dish can go straight from the stove to the counter. Additionally, granite is highly dense and gets high marks for repelling stains and scratches. All of this and it comes in a wide variety of colors.

Marble

Marble is another nice choice for countertops, but also for floors. It is heat resistant, however very hot items may discolor or in extreme cases catch the finish on fire. Marble is most beautiful polished to a high sheen. It is also one of the harder natural stones which makes marble tops extremely scratch resistant. Spills, on the other hand, should be cleaned immediately to avoid staining. Marble also comes in a variety of colors.

Limestone

Polished or honed limestone makes a sophisticated choice for flooring. Limestone is a relatively soft stone making it easier to cut and therefore less expensive than some other natural stones. Color choices may be limited to a shade of white or off-white and will blend with most

decorating schemes. Maintenance is a breeze as limestone can be cleaned with a mop and a mild detergent.

Onyx

Onyx is often confused with marbles, yet it is a significantly different rock type. Onyx is a sedimentary rock, formed as stalactites and stalagmites in cave interiors. This formation method results in the cryptocrystalline construction of the rock fabric, and it is the size and uniformity of these crystals that contribute to the classic translucent property of most onyx varieties. While vulnerable to chemical and abrasive attack, the decorative appeal of onyx is perhaps unsurpassed by any other material.

Travertine

Travertine is called a cross between marble and limestone. It makes a fine choice for almost any residential application; flooring, countertops, backsplash or shower. The colors range from ivory to a deep reddish brown to some gold tones. There are several finishes to choose from depending on its function in your home: polished, honed, brushed or tumbled for a natural look. Travertine is a fairly soft stone which makes it easy to cut and install. One word of warning, however, is to wipe spills quickly. Travertine's soft, porous nature allows for staining.

The earth provides us with a multitude of exquisite stone for home use. In light of the many applications of stone from floor to ceiling, and with so many colors and choices, now you have the basics that will help you select the perfect stone for your home.

Brian Childers is owner of International Granite and Marble located on Old Fannin Road in Flowood. International Granite and Marble is a supplier for all of the stone choices mentioned in this article.

