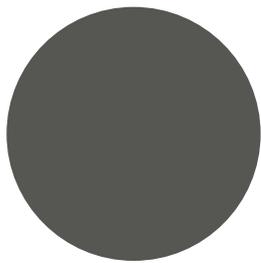
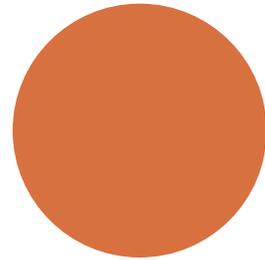
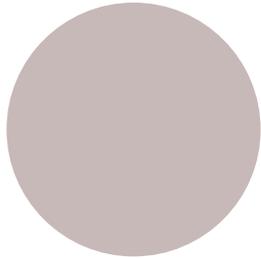


IMPROVEMENT CENTER



Guide to Natural Stone Flooring

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Stone flooring can create an elegant, unique look for your home. Since this is a natural material, no two stone floors match each other exactly; they differ in appearance, surface, hardness, and other features. Natural stone flooring is durable and long-lasting. In fact, ancient civilizations like the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans used stone flooring, and many of those floors still exist.

Natural Stone Materials

Natural stone appears in three major forms: igneous (think granite), metamorphic, and sedimentary.

1. **Igneous** rock's most famous representative -- granite -- is formed from magma. The hardest of these flooring materials, granite resists scratches, making it well-suited for areas that get hard use. Granite colors range from white to black, with colors and color combinations in the thousands.
2. **Metamorphic** rock has gone through changes over time due to heat and high pressure and includes:
 - Marble: This crystallized limestone features beautiful veining patterns. Colors range from bluish-white to black. Marble is more porous than granite and more susceptible to staining.
 - Slate: This stone consists of clay, quartz, and shale. Slate splits easily into sheets, and its surface cleaving gives it a rustic appearance. This dense material can be used in outdoor as well as indoor applications. Slate comes in nearly every imaginable color.
3. **Sedimentary** rock is softer, younger, and characterized by pitted surfaces. These materials display a range of warm, earth-tone colors. Sedimentary stone floors must be sealed to prevent staining. Different kinds of sedimentary materials offer these primary attributes:
 - Limestone: Formed from sediment and seashells, it features surface pitting, fissures, striations, and fossilized shells.
 - Sandstone: Over time, the compression of sand and water creates this rock, which shows a rough, porous surface.
 - Travertine: Formed by mineral springs, this stone presents



a honeycomb structure and a pitted surface. These pits can be left if you are looking for a highly textured surface, or filled with resin or grout to provide a solid surface.

Production and Processing

After natural stone is quarried, it goes through a series of processes to cut, polish, and finish it into squares. Typical sizes measured in inches include 12x12, 13x13, 16x16, and 18x18. Designers and contractors may turn to smaller sizes for trim and accents. Numerous styles and finishes can suit many different tastes. Surface finishes include:

- Acid-washed: The polished stone is washed in acid, which gives the stone an antique appearance. This finish can be used on all types of stone.
- Brushed: Hard metal or plastic brushes create a worn appearance with this finish.
- Flamed: The stone is heated with a blowtorch, causing the surface crystals to explode, leaving a rough texture. This finish may be suggested where a non-slip surface is needed.



- Honed: This flat, matte, or satin finish is typically easy to care for. Slate, limestone, and marble lend themselves to a honed finish.
- Polished: This shiny, mirror-like effect often appears with granite, marble, and limestone.
- Saw-cut: The stone is polished just enough to take out most of the saw marks from cutting, but it falls short of a honed finish.
- Split-faced: This rough texture is less abrasive than a flamed finish; the finish shows the stone's natural cleft.
- Tumbled: This smooth and slightly pitted finish offers broken or rounded edges. Smaller tiles -- like those used for borders -- may adopt this look. Marble, limestone, and travertine often feature this finish.

Prices

Costs vary widely for natural stone flooring, depending primarily on the type of stone and the size of the tiles. All costs estimated here are per square foot.

- Limestone is the least expensive, averaging about \$3 to \$10 for material, or \$6 to \$17 installed.
- Good quality slate costs \$4 to \$10, although lower-grade material can be found for as little as \$1 to \$3. The installed cost could range from \$6 to \$20.
- Travertine can run anywhere from \$2 for basic tiles up to \$25 for high-quality tiles. A typical travertine installation ranges from \$6 to \$32, depending on material quality.

- Granite has the greatest price variation. Depending on quality, granite can run from \$2 to \$40 for materials. An installed granite floor runs the gamut from \$6 to \$40.
- Marble ranks among the most expensive natural stone flooring materials, with high-end specialty marble tiles costing as much as \$40 for materials and as much as \$50 for installation. However, a typical standard marble floor could cost from \$9 to \$20 installed.

Installation

Do-it-yourselfers should probably avoid projects that involve installing natural stone. Working with these materials requires special tools, training, and experience. The subfloor must be strong enough to bear the weight of the stone and it needs the proper preparation, making this a job that may be best left to the professionals.

Care and Maintenance

Stone floors should be sealed after installation, and sealing may affect the color. Ask about the care specified for your floor; a porous material like travertine may require periodic resealing. Mop up spills immediately to prevent staining, and use only cleaners that are recommended by the manufacturer, avoiding acidic and abrasive products. These surfaces are generally easy to care for and clean -- it usually only takes regular sweeping or dust mopping with occasional wet mopping to keep these floors beautiful.

