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BEAUTIFY YOUR HOME WITH

# *Natural Stone*

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*Your guide to choosing natural stone  
and a qualified stone contractor.*



MARBLE  
INSTITUTE  
*of America*

GENUINE STONE



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## Natural Stone: *Your Best Choice for Lasting Beauty*

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Natural stone has been the premium building material of choice since the beginning of time. Quarried from rock beds formed over millions of years, natural stone used in residential and commercial settings comes from all parts of the world, including Italy, Spain, the U.S., Brazil, Canada, China, France, Israel, Greece, India, Mexico, Germany, Taiwan, and Turkey.

Marble and granite, two of the most popular stones among homeowners, are quarried in the form of huge blocks, some weighing up to 35 tons. These blocks are cut into slabs generally 3/4" or 1 1/2" thick and the faces polished to a specified finish. The slabs are then carefully crated and shipped to fabricators worldwide who process them into the final product.

Whether you're building a new home or remodeling, natural stone offers you unparalleled beauty, permanence, and uniqueness—and adds true value to your home.

Because stone is a natural product, not manufactured, no two pieces are exactly alike. This means each finished countertop, wall, floor, mantle, or sill is distinctive and matchless.

And, unlike synthetic imitations, natural stone can be three-dimensional and used as

### The Benefits of *Natural Stone*

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Classic Beauty  
Durability  
Easy Maintenance  
Superior Quality  
Affordability  
Increased Home Value

columns, statuary, balustrades, doorjambs, and even furniture pieces. When used in exterior applications, natural stone has also proven superior to manufactured or engineered stones in withstanding the effects of nature.

This guide has been developed by the Marble Institute of America (MIA) to help you make an educated selection from among the many varieties of natural stone available. You'll also find assistance on choosing a qualified stone contractor to design and/or install your natural stone project.

For additional information, contact MIA at 440-250-9222 or visit [www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com).

## How to Choose the Right Stone for Your Home

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You have many options when it comes to beautiful, long-lasting natural stone for your home's interior and exterior: slate, granite, marble, quartz-based stone, soapstone, and limestone, just to name a few. Choosing a natural stone for your home is a very personal decision, much like selecting wallpaper or artwork. While there are scores of natural stones to consider, some are better suited than others to particular uses in and around the home. This guide, along with your architect and stone contractor, can help you explore your options and offer guidance on the right stone for your home project.

### Factors to Consider in Selecting a Natural Stone

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#### **Color**

Natural stones are available in a beautiful spectrum of colors. Colors in granite and marble, for instance, can range from soft beiges and pinks and classic black-and-whites to rich corals, greens, and multi-colors. Marble traditionally features swirls and "veins" of colors, while granite has a flecked or pebbled appearance. Unlike the repetitive uniformity of materials

produced by machine or assembly line, natural stone's varied appearance has wonderful character and creates a one-of-a-kind effect everywhere it is used.

### **Finish**

Natural stone can be polished, honed, or flamed for a distinctive appearance:

- A polished finish has a glossy surface that reflects light and emphasizes the color and marking of the stone. This finish is typically used on walls, furniture tops, and floor tiles.
- A honed finish is a satin-smooth surface with relatively little light reflection. It is generally preferred for floors, stair treads, thresholds, and other areas where heavy traffic will wear off a polished finish.
- A flamed finish is a rough-textured surface used frequently on granite floor tiles.



## Usage

The harder the stone, the more it resists abrasion. One measure of natural stone's strength is the Measurement of Hardness (MOH) rating: 1 the softest and 10 the hardest. On the MOH scale, most marbles rate "3" and quartz-based granites rate "7." Using a softer stone simply requires the homeowner to use gentler cleansers and more frequent dusting to prevent scratching.

## Marble

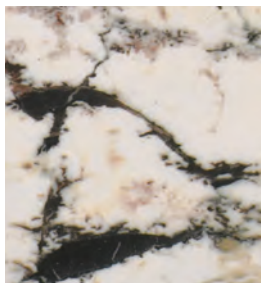
*Ideal for foyers, bathrooms, floors, and hearths*

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Marble is found in the mountainous regions of Canada, Italy, Germany, Spain, the U.S., and other countries. Because of its beauty and elegance, marble is a popular choice for countertops, floors, foyers, fireplace facings and hearths, walls, and windowsills.



Marble adds a sophisticated element to your home, and its wonderful appearance, superior engineering characteristics, and ease of maintenance make it a natural choice for floors, wall coverings, table tops, and bathroom walls, floors, vanity tops, tub decks, and showers.



Marble should be cared for as you would a fine wood finish. Using coasters on table tops and cleaning up spills immediately will preserve marble's natural beauty.

Another option for marble-loving homeowners is using serpentine for kitchen counters. Sometimes called the "green" marble, serpentine is not a true marble but offers a marble-like look. And, because it is magnesium-silicate based, it is not sensitive to citric acid and other kitchen spills.

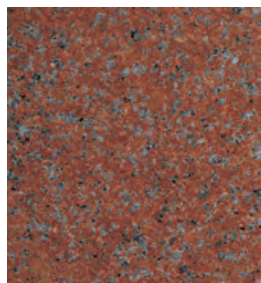
## Granite

*An excellent choice for kitchen countertops, floors, and other heavily used surfaces*

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Granite, quarried from the mountains of Italy, the U.S., India, and dozens of other countries, is one of the most popular natural stones on the market.

Available in a striking array of colors, granite's durability and longevity make it ideal for kitchen countertops and other heavily used surfaces, including table tops and floors.



While some synthetic surfaces scratch easily and melt under hot cookware, granite resists heat. Granite is also one of the most bacteria-resistant kitchen surfaces, and it is not affected by citric acid, coffee, tea, alcohol, or wine. It is also nearly impossible to scratch, and with proper cleaning, will not stain under normal use (ask your professional contractor about sealants available to further improve resistance to staining).

A leading consumer magazine recently compared granite with engineered stone, ceramic tile, laminate, butcher block, and other manufactured surfaces. Granite received the highest overall performance rating as a kitchen countertop material.

Because of its exceptional strength, granite is well suited for exterior applications such as cladding, paving, and curbing.

## Travertine, Limestone, Soapstone, Sandstone & Slate

*Beautiful enhancements for your home,  
inside and out*

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Travertine, limestone, soapstone, sandstone, and slate are other examples of natural stone frequently used in residential applications.



Travertine is a type of limestone and one of the most popular natural stones for interior and exterior wall cladding, interior and exterior paving, statuary, and curbing.

Limestone is widely used as a building stone because it is readily available and easy to handle. Popular applications include countertops, flooring, interior and exterior wall cladding, and exterior paving.

Soapstone is growing in popularity. Popular uses include kitchen countertops, bathroom vanities, fireplace surrounds, stoves and stair treads. Care and maintenance is easy, but different than other stone types. Contact your stone supplier for instructions.

Sandstone is frequently used for fireplace facings, chimneys, garden walls, patio benches, and at poolside.

Slate is a popular flooring material and sandstone and slate are often used for exterior paving or pavers. Other slate applications include kitchen countertops, fireplace facings, table tops, and roofing.





## Caring for your Natural Stone

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You'll find caring for your natural stone is easy. Warm water, mild dishwashing liquid, and a soft clean cloth are generally all that's needed to maintain most natural stone surfaces. Should a stain occur, it can usually be removed using a poultice available from your stone supplier.

More tips for preserving your natural stone's beauty:

- Dust mop natural stone floors frequently and protect floor surfaces with non-slip mats or area rugs.
- Blot up spills immediately.
- Protect countertop surfaces with coasters, trivets, or placemats.
- Don't use vinegar, lemon juice, or other cleaners containing acids on marble or limestone.
- Don't use abrasive cleaners on polished natural stone surfaces.

Additional information on caring for natural stone surfaces and stain removal can be found on the MIA website, or in the MIA's *Care & Cleaning for Natural Stone Surfaces* brochure. To order, send \$1.00 and a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

Marble Institute of America  
28901 Clemens Road • Suite 100  
Cleveland, Ohio 44145 USA  
[www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com)

## How to Select a Natural Stone Contractor

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1. Visit [www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com) to find a stone professional.
2. Ask family, friends, and neighbors for referrals and call local stone/tile suppliers for recommendations.
3. After you have identified several contractors, schedule appointments for estimates. Most will be free, but confirm in advance.
4. During your estimate, describe the “look” you’d like to achieve and ask questions.
5. Evaluate your quotes, request references, and check them. Ask to see examples of other projects recently completed by the contractor.
6. Request proof of liability and workers’ compensation insurance.
7. Select a contractor you believe is skilled and trustworthy, and with whom you feel comfortable. Make sure everything you and your contractor agree to is included in your contract. Don’t sign anything until you understand and agree with all the terms.
8. Plan your project carefully, then keep the lines of communication open with your contractor throughout the project. Keep a job file of all important documentation.
9. Ask your contractor to estimate a time frame for the job and plan accordingly.
10. Schedule periodic inspections with your contractor to achieve the end result you desire.



## Questions and Answers

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**Q:** *We're remodeling our kitchen and installing new countertops. Synthetic countertops cost slightly less than granite, but how do they compare in the long run?*

**A:** As the saying goes, imitation is the greatest form of flattery. Countertops made from acrylic and other manufactured materials may have the look of granite, but the similarities end there. For resistance to bacteria, heat, scratches, stains, and overall performance, granite is unsurpassed. Some marbles with honed or matte finishes also make high-quality kitchen countertops.



**Q:** *We're building a new home and would love to put a marble floor in our foyer, but we're concerned about the heavy foot traffic it will receive. Any suggestions?*

**A:** Marble has been used as a flooring material for more than 6,000 years and continues to be a popular choice for bringing beauty to entry foyers and other areas of the home. You need only take some simple precautions to protect your investment. Use a non-slip mat outside the foyer entrance and a carpet or area rug inside to capture the abrasive grit and dirt tracked in from outdoors. Dust mop your marble floor frequently to remove dirt and dust particles that can scratch the surface. Use warm water and a small amount of mild detergent to wash. Then rinse and dry thoroughly.

**Q:** *Is there any truth to the rumor that granite emits dangerous levels of radon gas?*

**A:** No, this is completely unfounded. Not a single instance of radon has been reported to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. Nevertheless, the Marble Institute of America consulted several of the nation's leading in geology and geochemistry scientists to evaluate the issue, and spoke with the major granite quarriers and producers in the U.S. Research has shown that actual levels of radon gas emissions from granites are insignificant and generally represent no threat to the health and well-being of people who live or work in buildings with granite countertops, floor or wall tiles, or any other granite furnishings.

**Q:** *After a recent party, we discovered a dark red stain, possibly red wine, on our sandstone hearth. What can we do to remove the stain?*

**A:** Because all natural stone is porous, it tends to absorb stains. But it is this same porosity that gives homeowners an edge in stain removal—you simply reverse the process by applying a chemical poultice, which re-absorbs the spill. The choice of poultice materials will vary depending on the type of stone and the spill. When thoroughly dry, the poultice is removed, as is the stain. Consult a stone restoration expert or your stone supplier for more information.

Get more answers to common questions by visiting [www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com)



# Myths Dispelled

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## Here are the facts about natural stone:

- Granite ranked #1 in cleanability when compared to six other countertop surfaces including stainless steel. (Based on a 1999 study by the Hospitality Institute of Technology and Management.)
- Natural stone is competitively priced with quartz surface products and often priced lower.



- Marble and Granite have the same level of cleanability as engineered stone. (Based on a 2006 study by the Hospitality Institute of Technology and Management.)
- Natural stone is low maintenance often only requiring warm water, mild dishwashing liquid and a soft cloth to maintain its beauty.
- Granite does not harbor radon. (Based on a technical paper by Dr. Donald Langmiur, PhD, Colorado School for Mines in 1995, confirming that consumers do not have to worry about radon exposure.)
- Many varieties of natural stone do not need to be sealed, although many are for customer peace of mind.
- Stone is a product of nature and has its own unique qualities that distinguish it from quartz surface materials. The wonderful character that is offered by vein patterns, color variations, and other design characteristics of stone should be taken into consideration when selecting the perfect stone for your project. Discuss these characteristics with your natural stone supplier.

## What Others are Saying

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*Natural stone is a key part of two of the top 10 elements of design in the home that are resonating with today's buyers: the desire for low-maintenance/no-maintenance materials and the use of natural materials inside and outside the home.*

*-Builder Magazine  
National Association of Home Builders*

Homeowners who remodel recover the following percentages of their remodeling costs at resale (note: upscale projects include stone):

- Bathroom remodel-upscale: 92.6%
- Bathroom addition-upscale: 84.3%
- Kitchen remodel-upscale: 79.6%

*-Cost vs. Value Report,  
Remodeling Magazine*

*In a study of materials for kitchen countertops, granite had the highest number of "excellent" ratings of any surface.*

*-Consumer Reports*

*"If, like us, you define value as 'performance over time', then natural stone should be your material of choice and engineered products will never be 'just as good' as natural stone until they can pass the same test of time."*

*-Ed Walsh, Sturgis Materials, Inc.*

Consumers using natural stone rave about their selection:

*"Its like jewelry for your home."*

*"We were awestruck by how many beautiful selections were available."*

*"When compared to other materials, price was comparable and didn't end up being a factor."*

*"It is low-maintenance."*

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**Beautify Your Home  
with Natural Stone!**

## About the MIA

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*For over sixty years, the Marble Institute of America has served as the authoritative source of information on standards of natural stone workmanship and practice and the suitable application of natural stone products.*

*MIA is also a leading promoter of stone usage in the commercial and residential marketplaces. MIA produces a number of consumer education materials on the use of natural stone and its proper care and maintenance, and hosts an informative web site for consumers and design and construction professionals at [www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com).*

## MIA Code of Ethics

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*The fabrication and installation of dimension-cut natural stone should meet MIA and other industry standards as articulated in the MIA Dimension Stone Design Manual and other technical publications, along with courteous and professional customer service. To achieve these goals, we pledge adherence to the following principles and policies:*

- Our primary objective is a satisfied and happy customer, be it a homeowner, a building owner, or a design professional.
- We will maintain and conduct business in accordance with fair and honorable standards of competition.
- Honesty, integrity, quality, and professionalism guide our firm's business philosophy.
- High standards of health, safety, and product quality will be incorporated into every installation.
- We shall deal fairly with customers, as well as with our employees, our subcontractors, and our suppliers.
- We encourage research to develop new materials, techniques, tools, and equipment, as well as improved methods of stone fabrication and installation.
- We pledge to assist in the education and product knowledge of our firm's clients and customers (builders, kitchen & bath dealers, architects, designers, and homeowners) before, during, and after installation.
- We shall strive to promote a spirit of cooperation within the industry.



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