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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.*



M S International, Inc.  
*Premium Natural Stones™*

[www.msistone.com](http://www.msistone.com)



## 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.

Natural stone is quarried in the form of huge blocks, some weighing up to 20 tons. These blocks are cut into slabs generally 3/4" or 1-1/4" thick and the desired finish is applied. 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, not manufactured, product, no two pieces are exactly alike, which means each finished countertop, wall, floor, mantle, or sill is distinctive. And, unlike synthetic imitations, natural stone can be three-dimensional and used as columns, statuary, balustrades, doorjambs, and even furniture pieces. When used in exterior applications, natural stone has also proven superior to manufactured or engineered products in withstanding the effects of nature.

### The Benefits of *Natural Stone*

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Classic Beauty  
Durability  
Sustainable  
Easy Maintenance  
Superior Quality  
Affordability  
Increased Home Value



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.

## 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: granite, limestone, marble, onyx, sandstone, serpentine, slate, soapstone, travertine, & quartzite. Choosing a natural stone for your home is a very personal decision, much like selecting piece of furniture 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 design professional 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 reds, 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.

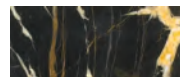
### Finish

There are several finishes available for natural stone and new finishes appear in the market regularly to keep pace with consumer demand. Some examples include: polished, honed, leathered, brushed, and antiqued. Ask your natural stone fabricator or designer about the pros and cons of the different finishes for your project.

### Usage

The harder the stone, the more it resists abrasion. Granites are typically the hardest of all stone types. Using a softer stone simply requires the homeowner to use gentler cleansers and more frequent dusting to prevent scratching. Consult with your contractor about the stone you have selected and its intended use.

### Marble



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

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Marble adds a sophisticated element to your home. Its wonderful appearance, superior engineering characteristics, and ease of maintenance make it a popular choice for countertops, floors, foyers,

fireplaces, furniture, showers, thresholds, tub decks, vanities, walls, and windowsills.

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.

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 and elegance.

## Granite



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

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Granite, quarried from the mountains of Brazil, 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 offers an impenetrable surface from which bacteria can be easily cleaned and it is typically 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 “impregnating” 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.

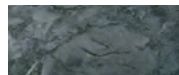
## Travertine, Limestone, Soapstone, Sandstone & Slate



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 floor and exterior paving, statuary, and curbing.

Limestone is widely used as a building stone. 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.

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.



## Easy Care Tips

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

**Coasters:** Use coasters under all glasses, particularly those containing alcohol or citrus juices.

**Trivets:** While many stones can withstand heat, the use of trivets or mats is recommended.

**Dust Mopping:** Dust mop interior floors frequently using a clean non-treated dry dust mop. Sand, dirt and grit are abrasive and can damage natural stone.

**Mats/Rugs:** Mats or area rugs inside and outside an entrance will help to minimize the sand, dirt and grit that may scratch the stone floor. Be sure that the underside of the mat or rug is a slip resistant surface.

**Vacuum Cleaners:** If used, be sure the metal or plastic attachments or the wheels are not worn as they can scratch the surface of some stones.

**Spills:** 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 as necessary.

### Cleaning:

- Clean stone surfaces with a neutral cleaner, stone soap, or a mild liquid dishwashing detergent and warm water.



- Similar to any item cleaned in your home, an excessive concentration of cleaner or soap may leave a film and cause streaks. Follow manufacturer recommendations.
- Use a clean rag mop on floors and a soft cloth for other surfaces for best results.
- Rinse the surface thoroughly after washing with the soap solution and dry with a soft cloth.

- Change the rinse water frequently.
- In the bath or other wet areas, soap scum can be minimized by using a squeegee after each use. To remove soap scum, use a non-acidic soap scum remover or a solution of ammonia and water (about 1/2 cup ammonia to a gallon of water). Frequent or over-use of an ammonia solution may eventually dull the surface of some stone types.
- In outdoor pool, patio or hot tub areas, flush with clear water and use mild bleach solution to remove algae or moss.

### Cleaning Products:

- Many suppliers offer products used for stone cleaning.
- Products containing lemon, vinegar or other acids may dull or etch calcareous stones.
- Scouring powders or creams often contain abrasives that may scratch certain stones.
- Many commercially available rust removers (laundry rust stain removers, toilet bowl cleaners) contain trace levels of hydrofluoric acid (HF). This acid attacks silicates in addition to other minerals. All stones, including granite and quartzite, will be attacked if exposed to HF.
- Do not mix ammonia and bleach. This combination creates a toxic and lethal gas.

## Topics to Discuss with Your Stone Contractor

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1. Review edges, backsplashes and additional options available.
2. How the templating and preliminary estimate process will work. Is there a fee to acquire an estimate?
3. During your estimate, describe the "look" you'd like to achieve and ask questions. This is an excellent time to discuss matters such as the blending of tiles and/or layout of the stone's veining and other characteristics.
4. Request references and examples of other projects recently completed.
5. Request proof of liability and workers' compensation insurance.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. Ask your contractor to estimate a time frame for the job and plan accordingly.
9. Schedule periodic inspections with your contractor to achieve the end result you desire.
10. Discuss ongoing care and maintenance for the stone you have selected.

## Questions and Answers

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**Q: *How does natural stone compare to solid surface or other engineered stone?***

**A:** Natural stone is elegant, durable and each piece has a distinct design that makes it 'one-of-a-kind.' That means the stone that you choose is distinctively yours. Manufactured stone products are made with stone fragments held together by an epoxy or resin and colored with pigments. These products can have the look and feel of stone, but they are mass-produced and not 'one-of-a-kind.'

**Q: *Should I seal my natural stone?***

**A:** Sealing is a common step taken on some stones as an extra precaution against staining. Sealing products used in the stone industry are "impregnators" which act as a repellent rather than a sealer. Sealing does not make the stone stain proof; rather it makes the stone more stain resistant. The application of impregnating sealers is a common practice. However, when consulting with your stone supplier, you may find that many stones do not require sealing.

**Q: *Why should my contractor use MIA or TCNA recommendations when installing flooring?***

**A:** There are many floor installation methods used throughout the country that do not comply with either the MIA or TCNA

recommendations. But using a non-standard method makes the installer stand alone in the event of a problem with the finished floor.

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

## Know the Facts

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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 countertops have never been known to emit dangerous levels of radon gas. Environmental Health and Engineering (EHE) recently conducted one of the largest studies of granite countertops, in which no stone was identified as a health risk when used as a countertop surface. EHE also conducted a global review of published studies, and these data show that radon emissions from granite countertops pose no health threat. For more information on these studies, go to [http://www.marble-institute.com/consumers/granite\\_radoninfo.cfm](http://www.marble-institute.com/consumers/granite_radoninfo.cfm).
- Many varieties of natural stone do not need to be sealed, although many are for customers' 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

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.

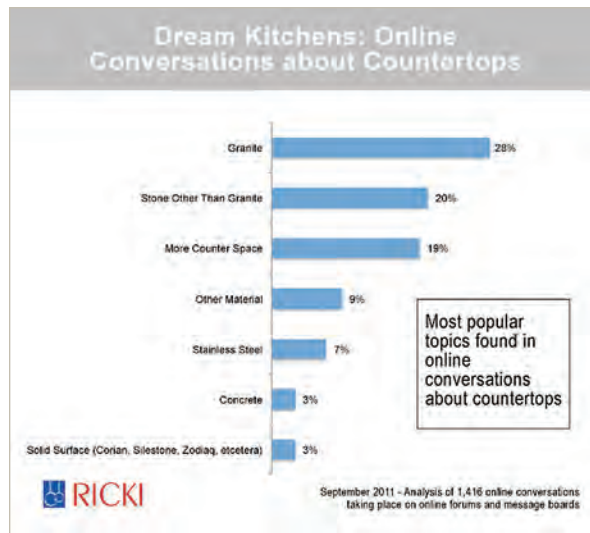
*Builder Magazine,  
National Association of Home Builders*

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*

## What Consumers Want for Countertops for Dream Kitchens



- 28% want Granite
- 20% want Natural Stone other than Granite
- 19% want More Counter Space
- 9% want Other Material
- 7% want Stainless Steel
- 3% want Concrete
- 3% want Solid Surface

*September 2011 Survey of online conversations by the  
Research Institute for Cooking & Kitchen Intelligence  
(RICKI)*

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:

*"It's 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 really is easy to care for."*



## About the Marble Institute of America

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Since 1944, the Marble Institute of America (MIA) 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 members include marble, granite, limestone, sandstone, and other natural stone producers and quarriers, fabricators, installers, distributors, and contractors around the world.

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 website for consumers and design and construction professionals at [www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com).

## Marble Institute of America 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.



## NATURAL STONE: Every Color is Green

Man's greatest architectural achievements have long been forged from natural stone. It is neither bonded together by petroleum based resins nor created in a factory.

Natural stone flooring and countertops are durable, nearly 100% recyclable, do not emit VOCs into homes or businesses and for everyday use can be cleaned with environmentally friendly cleaners. Natural stone is nature's original sustainable building material.

In partnering with the Center for Clean Products at The University of Tennessee to evaluate and ultimately improve the environmental performance of the industry, we have demonstrated our industry's sincere commitment to reducing the environmental impact of the use of stone on our planet

For research results, industry best practices, a life-cycle inventory and more, please visit:  
[www.marble-institute.com/sustainability](http://www.marble-institute.com/sustainability)



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Center:  
Verde Venezia

Clockwise from top:

Onyx Tiger, Crema Valencia, Rosso Venezia,  
Portoro Extra Vena Larga, Scheherazade, Sodalite Blue





MARBLE  
INSTITUTE  
*of America*

## **Marble Institute of America**

28901 Clemens Road • Suite 100  
Cleveland, OH 44145

Phone: 440.250.9222 • Fax: 440.250.9223

[www.marble-institute.com](http://www.marble-institute.com)

E-mail: [miainfo@marble-institute.com](mailto:miainfo@marble-institute.com)



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