

STONE



The Eighth Natural Wonder of the World

By Nevin Gray

Home decorating trends have certainly changed. The 70's: plush carpet. The 80's: flashy opulence. The 90's: cosmopolitan chic. Today: Mother Nature's finest work - stone.

Homeowners are no longer encumbered with stale trends or the look-like-the Joneses mentality. They want the home to express individualistic personality and lifestyles and discerning homeowners have elevated the use of natural stone – granite, marble, limestone, travertine, quartzite, slate – to new performance heights to achieve this goal.

Cody Armstrong, owner and founder of Grayson Stone notes, "The naturals add hues of harmony and definition of character to a room as well as an earthy comfort and understated luxury. This is a sensational combination to add to any room and stone is showing up everywhere as a result including up on roofs, decks, floors, walls, columns, countertops, fireplaces, even as art-inspired decorative accents in the kitchen, bathroom, and around the pool."

Stone products are gaining popularity because improved production processes and increased marketing have made them more available to homeowners. Home Artisan Authority (HAA) hopes to introduce these new options to more customers.

"The industry is expanding with new sources of stone that are more spectacular than ever," points out Tyler Wood, co-founder of HAA. "Grayson reminds us," he adds, "that there are different textures and patterns available not just the traditional bland colored tiles. These new options are embellished with rich, innovative detailing and provide our customers with affordable, durable, tasteful, decorating alternatives."

Here are some of the tips HAA and Grayson share with homeowners before selecting natural stones.

Marble is one of the most popular naturals, yet one of the most misunderstood and therefore often poorly applied. Consumers think only Italian marble is

high-grade, quality stone. In truth, the grade is more dependent upon the level of quality control implemented on the production line. Now quarried worldwide, this porous stone has three grades of quality: select, construction and third grade. Good, select grade marble can become third-grade if the equipment used to finish the product is inferior, or if quality controls are not maintained by the finishing staff.

ALL select-grade marble is not expensive. Some are more rare than others, which is the primary reason for their price variance. Marble is not well suited to chronically wet areas, so don't use too much of it in the bathroom or kitchen. Additionally, acidic fluids like wine or ketchup have a tendency to stain the surface of marble. **Ideal for:** bathroom flooring, back splashes, fireplaces.

Sandstone is the new concrete and cement. Though more porous, it is also a low-maintenance stone. Skid-proof, durable and more beautiful than its industrial-looking predecessors, sandstone adds an understated élan to areas often ignored in and around the home like pool decks. **Ideal for:** pool side areas or use in a more creative fashion on wall panels and window grills.

Quartz/Quartzite, honed, it is much like granite, soapstone or Jerusalem stone in that it adds a softer silhouette to hard corner areas like countertops while also harmonizing with the wood often used in kitchen cabinetry. It is the strongest of the stones and good for almost any type application. Home owners will enjoy the new colors - whites, greens, grays - and textured composition of quartzite. **Ideal for:** bathrooms, kitchens, driveways, walkways.

Limestone is a softer stone that should not be used in high-traffic areas. However, it is ideal for interior

walls or exterior application where foot traffic is minimal. It can be found with a rough, textured finish, or polished to water-smooth look but it must be sealed more often for protection. Characterized by three elements: sediments, quartz and calcite. **Ideal for:** walls, bedroom window sitting areas, bathrooms if sealed properly and regularly.

Granite is the low-maintenance natural. Less porous than marble, granite provides a much harder surface. It can be used inside or out, but it must be treated properly if used as a floor material. Unless "honed" when it is sandblasted to create a slip-resistant surface, granite is slick when wet. It is exceptionally dense so it is resistant to hot and cold or the staining impact of acidic foods. It is often more expensive than marble, but if you want durability and remarkable beauty, granite is ideal. **Ideal for:** kitchen, bathroom, bar counters.

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Slate is an excellent choice for outdoors or indoors. Predominantly used for walkways, roofs, walls and deck areas because of its rough texture, slate introduces three-dimensional depth and new color options. Slate will outwear limestone, sandstone and marble and is usually competitively priced too. **Ideal for:** rooftops but the smoother surfaced slate that has less "clefing" (rough surface area) is suitable for interior use.

Call Home Artisan Authority at (469) 855-7752 today for an introduction to these natural wonders.



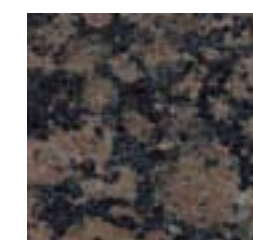
Luna-Pearl



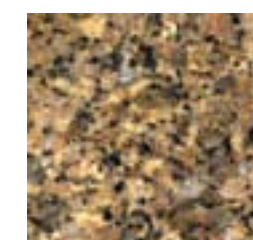
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