

Stone – an introduction

Contributed by richart khalil

If you want to bring a sense of solidity and permanence to your surroundings, so stone is the material that you should use. It is available in a range of beautiful colors, patterns and textures, and depending on the use it can look either very traditional or highly contemporary. There are many different purposes that stone can fulfill in the home – as flooring; treads on stairs; mantelpieces; kitchen worktops, sinks and splashbacks; basins and bathtubs. Your choice for any one of these tasks will depend partly on aesthetics – color, pattern, texture – and partly on practical considerations, as you will find that some stone is better suited to a job than others and it is important that you select the right one.

When choosing stone, you should consider first which type is traditional in your area. It creates a visual and psychological link with your home's surrounding and is considered to be an environmentally friendly option. Buying stone from salvage yards – paving slabs, tiles or masonry – is another eco-friendly option. It is possible to buy reproduction stone, which nowadays can look very convincing and which costs a fragment of the price of the real thing.

Following is a non-exhaustive list of the most used kind of stone:

Granite: is exceptionally hard and strong. It is waterproof, very hardwearing and can be highly polished. Granite's color varies from black through every shade of grey to yellow and pink tones. Its uses vary from kitchen worktops to flooring.

Limestone and sandstone: are mainly golden, with a variety of tones from pale to rich, but, they also come in shades of green, grey, brown, pink and blue. These stone are high quality flooring, but can be used for other purposes like cladding walls and bath surrounds.

Slate: is used as a slab whether in a larder or on the tread of a staircase because it is laterally strong. Its color ranges from dark, almost blue-black, to a greeny-grey. Patterns vary from gentle streaking and mottling to distinctive yellow mottling and silver streaks. It has been used historically for roofing tiles, for outside cladding in wet and windy locations.

Marble: is an opulent material valued for the beauty of its color, striated patterns and the degrees of its polish. It has a wide range of colors: green and yellow tones give way to warm pink, orange and red, brown, black and white. Wherever used in bathrooms, kitchens or salons it creates an image of elegant luxury. Stone, slate and marble slabs are heavy but also fragile during the installation. Therefore they should be installed by professionals on the correct type of flooring, as different kind of tiles has several ways of installation; on these considerations, take advice from your supplier and/or the professionals you employ to lay your stone.

Calculate the exact surface so you will not buy more quantities than you need, especially if you choose an expensive type of tiles. Be aware in your selection because once apposed, tiles are the hardest element to be changed in an architectural layout.