

# UNDERSTANDING AND SELECTING NATURAL STONE: *A 5-Step Checklist*



[evstone.net](http://evstone.net)

Natural stone is sought after to add beauty and drama to the interiors and exteriors of buildings ranging from residential homes to skyscrapers. Structural and decorative, natural stone has long been a highly prized architectural component but it's nature-made dissimilarities aren't always anticipated or embraced by those using it.

Keep in mind that each slab of natural stone is as unique as a fingerprint, quarried from the earth to reveal a number of amazing possibilities. To leverage these one-of-a-kind characteristics, it's important to understand what you can expect from natural stone, particularly as it relates to these five factors:

## 1. COLOR

One of the most sought after characteristics of natural stone is color variation. Simply put, no two stones are alike. The reason behind this is rooted in basic geology. When stone is buried and shielded from surface elements like wind, sun and rain, each side of the layered rock formation develops its own color and texture as minerals are deposited by groundwater.



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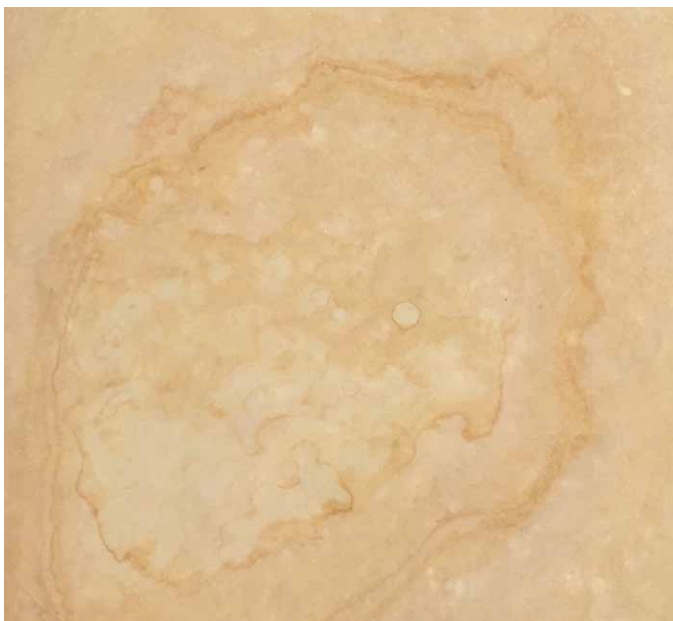
Once the stone is extracted from the earth and exposed to the elements, trapped moisture surfaces bringing with it minerals that color the stone as it air dries. It is not uncommon for certain stones to continue to change color over time. In fact, most stones experience a slight change within the first few months to a year after installation, but certain materials will show a noticeable difference.

Not surprisingly, sunlight also plays a significant role in color change. Natural stone installed indoors or in heavily shaded areas will experience a slight change in the first year, while sun-drenched exterior walls generally facing west see a more dramatic shift as sunlight fades darker tones. The degree may vary, but a change in color will happen and must be factored into anticipated project outcomes.



## 2. VEINING

Veining is a mineral deposit in the stone that can vary from large colorful bands to fine lines. Sometimes confused with cracking, veining is smooth to the touch and won't disrupt surface feel the way a crack might.



## 3. PITTING

Some stone, like Travertine, are predisposed to pitting, which is characterized by small holes running throughout the stone's surface for a highly desirable aesthetic element. Depending on their size, some pits are filled in with a neutral-toned epoxy to preserve the look and aid in upkeep.





## 4. FINISHES

Finishes add character, but it's important to note they are not necessarily required to capture the beauty and appeal of stone. The natural cleft, weathered edge and split face some stones' sedimentary layers possess before sawing is a "finish" in itself — no further processing is required for a superior look that cast stone attempts to imitate but can never truly duplicate.

However, natural stone that is sawed to specific thicknesses is a candidate for the following finishes, the application of which may ultimately influence color:

- **Honed** is the most popular finish, providing a satin-smooth finish with little or no gloss. As for color and character, honing provides a subtle amplification of veining and grain movement.
- **Sandblasting** natural stone creates a matte-textured finish with no gloss. The highly abrasive sandblasting process roughens the stone's grain and surface. In doing so, the impact of flecks, grain variations, veining and other characteristics is muted. The same holds true for color. Initially, sandblasting will lighten the stone's surface but, over time or if the surface becomes wet, the stone will revert to its original, pre-sandblasted color.



- **Polishing** results in a glossy surface that brings out the full color and character of the natural stone.



- **Thermal (Flamed)** is created by applying intense heat flaming to natural stone which may bring out warmer and brighter tones such as corals and pinks (the type of stone determines outcome).



- **Bush Hammering** is a mechanical process that pulverizes the grain of the stone on its surface. The resulting abrasions essentially mask the stone's inherent aesthetics with a textured surface that can vary from subtle to rough depending on desired outcome.



## 5. MAINTENANCE

Finishes also dictate the upkeep of natural stone. Honed and polished surfaces are smooth, hard and low-porous, making them ideal for nearly any project. Sandblasting and bush hammered finishes generally add a raised, sometimes rough, texture that requires routine pressure washing to keep dirt and debris from collecting in the crevices and dulling the stone's beauty.



Some people are inclined to take the extra step of applying a sealant or waterproofing agent to natural stone. While not necessary for High Density Type III Limestone because the impeccable quality of the material does not require additional protective treatments, a sealant may make cleaning of other stone types easier. This is especially true if they're used for cooktops/countertops, in areas that consistently stay damp, are shielded from the sun, or in high traffic areas. Likewise, waterproofing products such as veneer stone keep water from penetrating the stone facade and mortar joint constructions for long-lasting durability.

To ensure you're properly protecting your natural stone for a lifetime of enjoyment, reference the detailed tips and techniques found in our free [Care and Maintenance of Natural Limestone Guide](#).



## ASK FOR SAMPLES

Unlike the prefabricated sameness of man made products, the attributes of natural stone cannot be fully conveyed through photographs, nor can a single physical sample capture the essence of its variegated colors and textures.



BUFF



DOVEWHITE



DOVEWHITE BLUSH



GRAY



RIVERBUFF

Before you make a purchase decision, it's a good idea to contact the quarry to request several samples in a range of color options. That way, you can see and feel the beauty of natural stone and get a truer sense of the right choice for your project. Plus, you'll benefit from the guidance of expert stone craftsmen if you have additional questions.

Eden Valders Stone is happy to provide **free samples** and work with you to realize your vision. **Contact us** today to discuss your project!

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