



## Natural Stone Maintenance

### General Principles for Exterior Natural Stone Maintenance on the Gold Coast:

Maintaining a timber deck in Queensland's harsh climate of scorching sun, heavy rainfall, and high humidity reqMaintaining stone tiling in Queensland presents unique challenges due to the hot, humid climate, heavy rainfall, and intense UV exposure. Proper care is essential to preserve the beauty and longevity of your stone surfaces.

Here's a comprehensive guide to stone tiling maintenance in Queensland:

### 1. Understanding Your Stone Type:

Different natural stones have varying porosities and characteristics, which impact their maintenance needs. Common outdoor stone tiles in Queensland include:

- **Travertine:** Porous, often has natural voids. Requires regular sealing.
- **Granite:** Very dense and durable, less porous than many other stones, but still benefits from sealing.
- **Limestone:** Porous and can be soft, prone to etching from acids. Needs regular sealing and gentle cleaning.
- **Sandstone:** Highly porous, prone to staining and efflorescence. Requires frequent sealing.
- **Bluestone:** Dense but can be somewhat porous. Can fade or become chalky if not properly sealed and maintained.
- **Marble:** (Less common for outdoor in QLD due to high maintenance) Highly susceptible to etching from acids and scratching. Requires very careful maintenance and frequent sealing.

### 2. Regular Cleaning:

- **Sweep or vacuum frequently:** Remove loose dirt, dust, and debris that can scratch the surface.
- **Hose down:** For outdoor areas, a regular hose down can remove surface grime.
- **Gentle cleaning:** Use a pH-neutral stone cleaner diluted according to the manufacturer's instructions. Avoid harsh chemicals, acidic cleaners (like vinegar or lemon juice), or abrasive scrubbers, as these can etch, discolour, or scratch the stone and break down the sealer.
- **Mop or wipe:** Use a soft mop or cloth. Change the cleaning solution frequently to avoid spreading dirt.
- **Rinse thoroughly:** Always rinse the stone thoroughly with clean water after cleaning to remove any cleaner residue.
- **Dry immediately:** Especially for more porous stones, dry the surface with a clean towel or mop to prevent water spots and mineral deposits. This is particularly important in humid Queensland to prevent mould and mildew.

### 3. Sealing is Crucial (Especially in Queensland):

- **Porosity:** Most natural stones are porous and will absorb liquids, leading to staining, mould growth, and deterioration. Sealing creates a protective barrier.
- **Types of sealers:**
  - **Penetrating/Impregnating Sealers:** These are absorbed into the stone, protecting it from within without changing its natural look or slip rating. They are generally recommended for most natural stones, especially outdoors in Queensland.
  - **Enhancing Sealers:** These also penetrate but deepen the colour of the stone, giving it a "wet look."
  - **Topical/Coating Sealers:** These sit on the surface, creating a film. While they offer good protection, they can sometimes look unnatural, peel, or scratch. They might also alter the slip rating. Generally not recommended for outdoor stone in Queensland due to slip hazards and potential for peeling in harsh sun.
- **Reapplication:** The frequency of reapplication depends on the stone type, traffic, exposure to elements, and the type of sealer used. In Queensland's climate, outdoor stone often needs resealing every 1-3 years, or when you notice water no longer beads on the surface.
- **Professional sealing:** For best results, consider having your stone professionally sealed. They use commercial-grade sealers and have the expertise to apply them correctly. Many companies in Brisbane, Gold Coast, and Sunshine Coast specialise in this.

### 4. Stain Management:

- **Act quickly:** Spills should be cleaned up immediately to prevent them from penetrating the stone and causing stains.
- **Identify the stain:** Different types of stains (oil-based, organic, metal, rust, etc.) require different poultice treatments. Consult a stone care professional or a reputable guide for specific solutions.
- **Avoid DIY solutions:** Do not use abrasive powders, acidic cleaners, or bleach, as these can cause permanent damage.

### 5. Efflorescence (White Haze):

- **Common in QLD:** This white, powdery residue is caused by mineral salts migrating to the surface of the stone and crystallizing as water evaporates. It's common in areas with high moisture and humidity, like Queensland.
- **Removal:** It can often be removed with a stiff brush and water. For stubborn efflorescence, specific efflorescence removers are available, but always test in an inconspicuous area first. Ensure the underlying moisture issue is addressed to prevent recurrence.

### 6. Preventing Damage:

- **Protect from sun and rain:** Consider pergolas, awnings, or shade sails over outdoor stone areas to reduce exposure to harsh UV and heavy rain.
- **Furniture pads:** Place felt pads under outdoor furniture legs to prevent scratching.
- **Pot plants:** Use trays under pot plants to prevent water and soil stains. Elevate pots to allow for airflow and prevent moisture trapping.
- **Avoid dragging heavy objects:** This can cause deep scratches.
- **Address cracks or chips:** Small chips or cracks can be repaired by a professional stone restorer to prevent them from worsening.

## **7. Professional Restoration:**

- If your stone tiling has become dull, scratched, stained, or etched, professional stone restoration services can revive its appearance. They can hone, polish, grind, and repair various types of stone to bring back its original lustre.
- Many companies in South East Queensland offer these services.

By adhering to these maintenance practices, your stone tiling in Queensland can remain a beautiful and durable feature of your home for many years. When in doubt, always consult with a local stone care specialist.