

sealing travertine

Authored by: **Maurizio Bertoli** [mailto:mbstone.com]

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I just read your answer about not needing to seal travertine and also your comments about soap scum possibly being efflorescence. I was wondering if you would comment on why I was told to seal it 10x because travertine is very absorbent and that if I didn't seal it a lot at first and then once a year, soap scum would imbed into the travertine and not be able to be removed. FYI the tile is from Turdey and is a buff finish. The home is on Lake Michigan and we rent it out and have it cleaned weekly. Also what natural cleaners are best to use? What causes efflorescence and how do you get rid of it? Thanks in advance for your help.

Dear Eileen:

œ I was wondering if you would comment on why I was told to seal it 10x because travertine is very absorbent and that if I didn't seal it a lot at first and then once a year, soap scum would imbed into the travertine and not be able to be removed. œ

Right now I'm laughing too hard to make any comment!

Okay, let's forget about different opinions and try to stick to scientific information. Fair enough for you?

Good!

Travertine in general has an absorbency rate anywhere between 0.4% and 1%. These number may not tell you much, but if you consider that *really* absorbent stones (certain limestones, sandstone, etc.) are rated anywhere between 5% and 15%, I think you will begin to realize that the maximum value of 1% does not make travertine a very absorbent stone. If you add to that the unusual and almost unique surface tension generated by travertine when honed or polished, you will see that it seldom absorbs a darn thing, including the sealer of course.

Now, why they told you differently and to seal 10 times and all that crock of you-know-what, it is something that you should ask the stone œgurusœ that told you that œ not meœ! J

Try this: get a spare tile and then spill a few drops of water on its finished side. Observe how long it will take for the water to get absorbed by the stone; and by that I don't mean that you can expect to see the water disappppearing inside the stone (it will never happen), but just seeing the stone under the water becoming darker than the rest. That will tell you how œabsorbentœ your travertine is.

œ Also what natural cleaners are best to use? œ

I really don't know what you mean by œnatural cleanerœ, but if you're making reference to the so called œgreen cleanersœ, not only don't they clean for nothing, but I also have good reasons to believe that the only real green thing about them is the color of the money that their promoters are making out of this new fad. If a cleaner is biodegradable, it's good enough for me and the environment. As for what to use more specifically, by logging into the Helpful Hints

section of our website at: http://www.mbstone.com/HH_promo/helpful_hints.htm, you will be able to get the short version of our maintenance guidelines at no charge. The full version of it â€” a 7-page document considered by many as an industry benchmark â€” is available in pay-per-download format in our Educational Literature section at: <http://www.mbstone.com/literature/literature.htm>.

â€œ What causes efflorescence and how do you get rid of it? â€•

Efflorescence is only caused by the migration of water from behind and under the tiles to the surface of the stone through the stone's core. How to get rid of it? You have to get rid of the cause, not the consequence. In other words, you have to find out why the water is going behind and under the tiles and find a way to dry it and prevent it from going in again. And that is the very reason why I always say that the stone in a shower stall is just as good as the installer that set it in place. Of course, if you apply a sealer to your stone (assuming that it can take one in) and then you have water going behind and under the tiles, the problem of efflorescence will be magnified. And that is why I always say that's never a good idea to seal stone in a wet environment to begin with.

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Thank you

Ciao and good luck,

Maurizio Bertoli

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