



MVP Natural Products FAQ - Sealers

What is a sealer?

A sealer is a specially formulated chemical product designed to protect your tile, stone and grout. Sealing your surfaces will decrease the possibility of anything staining or harming your surface. There are basically two types: sealers that *lay on top* of the surface, usually called topical sealer, coating sealer or surface sealer; and sealers that *go inside* the surface, usually called impregnating sealer, penetrating sealer or sub-surface sealer. Within those two types, you have four sub-types: water-based, oil-based, lacquer-based and solvent-based. Sealers can also bring your stone to its raw state, enhance the color, add gloss, reduce gloss, etc., or do nothing but seal. Your own performance and appearance objectives will dictate the type of sealer you use.

Why should I seal my natural stone?

Like any investment, your quality surfaces call for the best and most practical protection possible. Protected stone resists staining, and provides a healthier and safer environment. With proper maintenance, these surfaces can easily serve you a lifetime.

How do I clean my newly-installed and sealed tile or stone countertops?

Our suggestion would be to use a daily counter cleaner specifically formulated for tile and stone some are available in a spray, some come as a wipe. For a more aggressive cleaning, we recommend using a spray. Every cleaning reinforces the protection of the initial sealing, and less is more when it comes to cleaning tile and stone do not use more than is necessary to cover your area.

How can I tell if my stone has already been sealed?

Apply a drop of water (about the size of a nickel) to the surface and let stand for at least 15 minutes. If the stone does not darken, then your stone is likely sealed against water-based stains. However, testing for oil repellency is not as simple because if the stone surface is not sealed, then you don't want to stain it by deliberately placing oil on it. Be aware that although your surface may repel water, that does not mean that it has been sealed properly its best to get a professional evaluation.

How long do sealers last?

Amount of use, level of maintenance, and environment all affect sealer life. Generally speaking, if you sealed your stone with a quality sealant and have maintained it regularly with daily cleaners, your sealer can last anywhere from 2 to 5 years or further. However, just because a sealer can last several years, that doesn't mean that it will or even should. All factors should be considered. For example, a countertop in your summer cabin can go longer between each sealing than a shower floor in your townhouse that gets used daily.



Is one coat of sealer enough for natural stone?

Every stone is different. Based on the product you're using and the type of stone, one coat may be sufficient, however, some stone surfaces will require two coats, and a few of the more absorbent stones may need additional coats to be properly sealed. Consult the manufacturer or call a stone care professional both can offer more specific information on how many coats are needed for your particular natural stone.

Will sealing my stone and tile prevent it from scratching and chipping?

No, not any more than having a car waxed prevents it from getting scratched or dented. Sealing protects the stone and tile from harmful elements the same as a car wax does, however, by the same logic, it is not an invisible bullet-proof shield. If you roll a desk chair across your travertine floor or drop a stack of frozen steaks against your granite bar, no amount of sealer will keep them from getting damaged.

Is it really necessary to seal stone outdoors?

In a word, yes. Outdoor elements can be very harsh on your stone. Things that affect your stone range from the visible (pollen, dirt, etc.) to the invisible (ultra-violet rays from sunlight). If your aim is to preserve the natural stone in your yard in which you have already made an investment, spending the time and money to seal it is the most practical thing you can do. Sealing with our sealers will give you maximum protection against rain and snow, chemicals, pollutants, oils from trees and plants, and all the mess that goes along with a typical outdoor barbeque. Remember that before your stone was ever installed, before it was cut from its quarry, its look was first created naturally by years of water and outdoor elements. These natural elements will continue to alter its appearance. Besides weather, you are also faced with the same appearance-altering issues of an interior environment such as food, drinks, pollutants, pet liquids, etc. If you like the way your stone looks now and don't want it to change, the only defense you have is to seal it. By the same logic, if you want it to continue being shaped by the elements, then you don't have to do anything. Our best advice is for you to decide what your personal maintenance and appearance objectives are, and then ask a professional to recommend what is required to meet them.

What if its granite? Granite is very hard, very shiny and very dense. Does it need to be sealed?

Like any stone installation, that depends on how you want it to look in the long-run. If you want it to look the same as the day it was installed, then, yes, you do need to seal your granite. Remember that American ideas of stone beauty can be very different from the rest of the world. In Europe and South America, stone is usually installed and never treated, so that after years of dirt, water and use, it has an old-world patina the kind of look that many Americans pay big bucks for to have installed new. Whatever look your stone has now, if you want it to continue looking the same way, you will need to maintain it accordingly and that includes sealing it.



I put something down on my polished stone and now it has a light-colored ring mark on it. It looks like a water spot, but I can't get rid of it. What do I do?

This is actually an etch mark, which is commonly confused with hard-water staining. Etch marks are not stains but they occur on stone surfaces when acids or other chemicals react with the minerals in the stone. This causes the surface to feel rough and look a little discolored - usually lighter. Unlike water stains, *etch marks actually require refinishing the surface* in order to restore the original, polished look.

Yes, you can learn how to refinish a stone surface yourself (if you spend enough time and money, you can learn how to do anything), but we recommend that you consult a professional to remove etch marks.

My stone was sealed and I still get these etch marks?

Bottom line, there is no sealer that makes a stone "etch proof". The best solution is to take care that nothing comes in contact with your stone that will leave an etch mark. Keep in mind, too, that not all stones have chemical reactions. Many types of granite, for instance, do not have the same chemical-reaction as some marbles. While the reactions might be different, etching is an unavoidable characteristic of all natural stones and a there should be some level of expectation that etching at some point will occur to your tops.

What is porosity and why does it differ by stone?

The technical definition for porosity is the ratio of the volume of a material's pores to its total volume. In other words, the ability your stone has to soak up stains like a sponge. Porosity is usually expressed as a percentage, and porosity differs according to a stones mineral composition and geological formation. The *process* in which the stones were formed, and *where* in the world they were formed, affects the porosity of the stone.

Why does my granite stain?

Granite is like any other natural stone; it can be dense or porous, and is absorbent to some degree. Stones that have more swirls or veins tend to be more porous and absorbent. Generally, granite with smaller crystals is more absorbent than granite with large crystals.

Why does the name of stone change from one store to the next, although the stone looks identical?

Stone could sometimes be from the same quarry but from different sections and different cutters. Some stones look identical but originate from different parts of the world, which makes the appearance look the same but possibly with different mineral composition. Names for stone are also subject to how the particular seller wishes to market it.

What should be the minimum amount of time between visits from a maintenance professional?

We recommend having a pro evaluate your installation once a year to keep you up on any professional maintenance that may be required between your normal routine.



Why can't I use my ceramic tile products on my natural stone?

There are some products that can be used on practically any surface, however many cleaning products that are specifically designed for ceramic tile are typically harsher and can damage both the natural stone and the sealer. Most ceramic tile cleaners you get at the grocery store will have acid or alkaline, which are never appropriate for natural stone. Some professional cleaning products can be used on both ceramic tile and natural stone, but only if properly diluted.

How do I remove mildew and algae from my natural stone shower?

To remove mildew and algae from an area that has not been maintained properly, we recommend using a degreaser that has been diluted with hot water. For natural stone, the degreasers available on this site should be diluted 20 parts water to 1 part degreaser. Use a plastic-bristled scrub brush and wear protective gloves. The same goes for anywhere you find algae or mildew on ceramic tile - swimming pools, fountains, etc. While some household cleaning guides suggest using a mixture of chlorine bleach and water, it is actually safer just to use a daily cleaner that prevents the growth of mildew and algae (all the cleaners available through this site inhibit the growth of mildew and algae). Chlorine bleach, even when diluted, can change the color of grout and neighboring surfaces.