

Granite in dark colours can be chosen for areas subject to rough use and high traffic

FLOORING IT THE ETHNIC WAY

Architect Vasudevan Kadalayil gives comprehensive details on the type of stones for use in flooring for different rooms in the home

Flooring is a major feature in home design that sets the mood of a home. The selection of the right kind of flooring involves thinking at multiple levels - the most important being the kind of aesthetic disposition that one has, besides durability, safety, hardness, and the tactile feel of the floor. While imported marble, wooden floors and vitrified tiles are quite popular, there is a growing trend of using Indian marble, granite and other stones.

Types of stones

Stones available in India can be classified broadly into the following categories: Marble, Granite, Sandstone, Limestone, and Slates and Quartzite. Most stones go by the name of their source.

Marble: Most marble comes from Rajasthan followed by Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. The current varieties from Rajasthan include Rajnagar Marble and Abu Black. Gujarat produces a variety called Ambaji White while Madhya Pradesh yields the popular Katni marble.

Granite: Some of the popular shades in granite are Sadarahalli Grey, Sira Grey, Magadi Pink, Madurai Gold, Ivory Fantasy, Kashmir White, Jet Black and Galaxy Black. Granite is dense and hard and therefore makes for excellent floors for interior and exterior applications.

Sandstone: Many types of sandstone are also great flooring options such as Dholpur Beige, Agra Red,

White Mint, Kandla Grey, Teak and Rainbow. Natural quarry finish sandstone can be used for landscape paving, pool surrounds, patios and verandahs. Finished versions can be used for interior spaces.

Limestone: Popular varieties are Jaisalmer Yellow, Eta Gold, Kota Blue and Cudappah Black. These are available as slabs and tiles and make for excellent interior flooring applications.

Slate and quartzite: Slate stones are sourced from metamorphosed sedimentary rocks and have strong layer separations. This makes it tricky to work with and if cut expertly along the layers; they will yield flat slabs that can be used for flooring. They are available in a variety of colours and textures.

Finishes and textures

Typically they can be classified as polished and semi-polished. The semi-polished stones come in various categories such as Honed, Leather, Antique, Flamed, Bush-hammered and so on. Finishes can be selected based on the function and aesthetics. The polished stones are easier to clean and maintain but cannot be used in areas prone to wetness.

For different spaces

Success of the flooring depends on a deep understanding of the material properties and the uses that they could be put to.

QUICK BYTES

■ USE OF LOCAL MATERIALS IN FLOORING IS COST-EFFECTIVE

■ CAREFUL SELECTION OF FLOORING MATERIALS ALSO INCLUDES DURABILITY, HARDNESS, AND SAFETY OF THE RESIDENTS

■ NO TWO STONES AND SLABS WILL HAVE THE SAME COLOUR AND TEXTURE. THIS ADDS TO THE NATURAL LOOK

Entrance verandah: Entrance lobbies are subject to a fair amount of rough use and maximum traffic.

Dark coloured granites are a great choice here. A texture-finished granite (flamed/ honed/ leather) with anti-skid properties works great if it is prone to some spray from the rain. Slate and stones can also be used very well.

Lobby, living, dining: The number of options opens up here. Light coloured flooring - like Eta Gold, Jaisalmer - would look great. If one has a step down living, it would be advisable to contrast that space with



Pic courtesy: Ecumene

a darker/lighter coloured stone. This would avoid accidents as it increases the awareness of differing floor levels. One can also use leather-finished floors that give a tactile feel if one walks barefoot.

Kitchen and bathrooms: Indian kitchens handle a multitude of spices and oils. It is important for the floor to be dense in nature to prevent any absorption on spillage. The best option is dark granite. Do not use Sadarahalli and Sira granite, as they tend to absorb and retain moisture. The same rule applies to bathrooms. All other stones could be used for wall finishing. It could be advisable to choose an anti-skid semi-polished finish for bathroom floors.

Bedrooms and staircases: In most homes architects would prefer light coloured stones in bedrooms. Most types of stones would be suitable for bedrooms and stairs.

Thickness and calibration

Granite and marble slabs come in 20mm thickness. Many granite shades come in 10mm thickness as tiles measuring 1 foot x 2 feet or lesser. Tiles are cheaper than slabs. Stones other than marble and granite come in smaller sizes (typically 22 inches x 22 inches). One must ensure that these tiles are calibrated for right angle corners and for an almost uniform thickness. It is also important to ensure that a qualified building professional inspects the

lot for defects before selection and purchase.

Workmen

Ensure that the workmen who would lay the material are proficient in doing so. A good marble layer may not necessarily be able to handle slate well and vice versa. It is best to take references from their clients and visit their finished works before appointing them. It is worth the time, effort and money.

Sealers and grouts

Most natural stones are porous in varying degrees and hence all tiles, stones, grouts and masonry surfaces may be protected from stains of water/oil/food by apply-

ing a penetrating sealer that also provides a 'wet look'. It is also important to use the right kind of colour matching grouts that last longer than the usual cement grout.

Natural materials

It is natural to have variations in colour and texture between stones or slabs in the same lot. It is advisable to dry lay the floor in order to ascertain the pattern that emerges. It is best to celebrate this variety than to shun it in favour of a uniform shade. Much like how two human beings do not resemble each other, it is difficult to find uniformity in stones - there is beauty nevertheless. This beauty enriches and endows character to spaces.

CONCEALED FOR COMFORT

Architect Sangeetha Mayur explains how you maintain aesthetics through concealed wiring and fixtures



Pics courtesy: Archiscape



improve the function and look of any space, adding color, visibility and artistry to the room. False ceiling lighting and furniture lighting is one of the easiest ways to add color and sophistication to an otherwise unremarkable space.

Creating a secondary ceiling offers flexibility to service and mask wiring, ducts and pipes that run below the primary ceiling. Well-placed fixtures in coves or cabinets can make it much easier to see at night as well, improving safety and security. They can be finely controlled with dimmers and operate at a lower level of intensity. Home accent lighting, therefore, is to be often designed to function without being noticed.

Smart systems

As technology improves, concealed wiring is becoming more accessible and efficient for home tech and home electronics. Whether you choose the sleekest TV or the svelte AV component, nothing can make up for the aesthetics of your room if there's a mess of cables cascading around.

Smartly designed, concealed trims in the ceiling, baseboards from around the perimeter of the room and raceways along the wall via a peel-and-stick adhesive can simply slip away the wires and can be practically invisible and blend in better to the interior décor.

If the home theatre is carpeted, the easiest way to do may be to tuck the cable under the carpet straight to the speaker location. For hardwood or tile floors, it would be a good option to lay flat cables that are unobtrusive

or even paintable, which will make it even more inconspicuous.

Camouflaged restrooms

A restroom with an unappealing appearance, even with a small piece of metal or plastic piping can make a visual blemish. While pipes provide a vital purpose in a home, when exposed, they cause an unsightly flaw in the room.

New techniques of concealed cistern system provides design freedom by taking the toilet off the floor and mounting it on the wall, while concealing the tank and other functional components. Innovative designs of free standing washbasins and water faucets are planned in the initial

stages of construction with the piping that are safely hidden behind the wall. The technology allows a more streamlined and clean look from floor to ceiling.

Aesthetic kitchens

The kitchen is another important place in a home where various pipes are to be addressed. Be it a vent pipe, a gas pipe or a water line, hiding exposed pipes gives the room a more decorative feel.

A kitchen vent pipe is necessary to vent the steam and heat produced when you cook but its visibility makes the kitchen's aesthetic appeal suffer. Instead of moving the pipe, consider a few design options to conceal it. De-

pending on the length of the pipe, and how it is oriented on the wall, installing a false cabinet or a kitchen loft conceals its presence. Not only will it hide the ugly pipe, but also give an additional storage space. If there is no way to cover the vent pipe because of its orientation or the layout of the cabinets, the only way to screen its presence is to draw the eye away. Painting the pipe the same color as the walls or cabinets can make it blend in to the background, so that the eye isn't automatically drawn to it.

Gas pipes require flexible supply tubes. These are usually stainless steel pipes that are coated with PVC. To the best extent possible, keep all the pipes and tubing hidden behind walls and within cabinets.

The demand for partially or fully concealed fixtures has increased in recent years. The reasons may be versatile and differ completely from one homeowner to another. Nonetheless the number one reason remains; aesthetics. 'Invisible' is not only the logical answer to meet these demands, but simply the ideal solution for beautiful homes.

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Functionality is most important when it comes to designing a residence. The design should be one that ages gracefully where the residents can grow with it. A design, however creative or spectacular the concept may be, can serve to be an eyesore if the right blend of functionality and aesthetics is not factored in. From pure aesthetics to functionality, homes interiors today should offer its residents, a lifestyle that is sur-

rounded by beauty in every detail.

Structural aspects

Tastefully done-up interiors can take a beating if there are structural features, open plumbing pipes and air-conditioning ducts running along walls and ceiling of the house. More so, if these varied service lines have not been fixed well, it would rob the place of the overall look. This

is where the idea of 'conceal' is necessary and a false envelope comes in.

Few areas in the residence where these aesthetics can be achieved without compromising on the functional aspect in today's premium homes are accent lighting, home tech systems, kitchens and restrooms

Home accent lighting

Modern lighting systems can

■ AESTHETICS OF A HOME CAN BE MAINTAINED WITH CONCEALED PIPES, WIRING AND FIXTURES

■ CLEVERLY CONCEALED LIGHTING FIXTURES IN ALCOVES AND CABINETS MAKE IT EASIER TO SEE AT NIGHT WITHOUT BEING INTRUSIVE ON THE DECOR

■ WHEN CERTAIN FIXTURES ARE DIFFICULT TO CONCEAL, CAMOUFLAGING THEM WITH ACCESSORIES CAN DO THE TRICK

QUICK BYTES