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LET'S REMODEL

With care, marble stays beautiful

Q: While I was on vacation recently I could not help but notice how bright and shiny the marble floors and vanity tops were. It made me notice how dull and dingy my own marble floors and countertops really are. What can be done to revitalize them?

A: First it is important to understand the marble product and why your countertops and floors look the way they do. Marble is a natural stone created by high temperature and great pressure, with colors decided by the minerals present at the time of formation. Most true marbles are composed primarily of calcium carbonate. Calcium is violently affected by anything acidic (cleaning products, juices, perfumes, wines, alcohol, etc.). Acids actually melt the surface of the marble making it dull and rough feeling. Dirt is the second leading culprit. Dirt picked up and ground into the marble surface where there is foot traffic equals sanding your floor with a No. 400 grit sandpaper, actually sanding the finish off. The shine on your marble is brought out by sanding with increasingly finer grit up to No. 8000 grit in some cases.

Most problems with marble can be traced to three categories: traffic, cleaning products, and/or cleaning methods. Traffic problems can be solved by the use of rugs at entrances, removal of footwear before coming in from the outside, or changing entrances into the home. Cleaning products that are neutral-based, especially those formulated for marble, will help protect and restore marble that has not had its finish damaged. Cleaning methods and procedures can also create a problem. This includes cleaning too much, using waxes and cleaning agents that leave residues, and water with high mineral contents. Since marble varies somewhat, you should check with a professional marble care representative for the right product and maintenance program for your floor.

Marble maintenance problems are usually easy to rectify. What can you do to restore the marble's luster? First, a marble surface that has been ground and repolished has a richer look than most new marble. This holds especially true on floors. (Floors that are ground after installation are flatter and more uniform, and the shine seems deeper and richer). One point to remember is that no matter how bad your marble looks, it is still far less expensive to refinish than to tear out the existing marble and replace it with a new floor. The appearance of all stone and terrazzo floors can be improved with refinishing. In some cases, when the tiles are set, lippage (unevenness), can occur and the refinishing process actually grinds the tiles flat with one another. Although most stains can be removed, it is a time-consuming process, often taking days or weeks. Prevention is the key here. See a spill — wipe it up. The longer it sits the more damage it can do. A 10-cent coaster under your glass or a foot pad under that metal table leg can save you an expensive repair. Preventive maintenance is essentially the key to a bright, beautiful, and long-lasting marble floor or counter top. The use of a proactive care system that incorporates an impregnator (for maximum stain protection and dirt repulsion), a conditioner (for protection against wear), a cleaner (too keep the luster) and periodic professional care can keep your stone floor looking beautiful always.

Marble is truly one of nature's most beautiful creations and with proper care and maintenance its beauty will last for a lifetime or more.

Kenny Laymons, Alamar, Inc., Marble Medic Division, Lincoln Park, 1-800-723-2562 or 313-389-8453.

If you have home improvement questions, call Gayle Walters at the Michigan Remodeling Association (MRA) at 810-335-3232 or, send questions to "Let's Remodel," 2187 Orchard Lake Road, Suite 103, Sylvan Lake, MI 48320. Answers are provided by members of the MRA, the local chapter of the National Association of Remodeling Industry (NARI). Members include professional contractors, manufacturers, wholesalers and lenders representing all facets of residential and light commercial remodeling. For more information or a free copy of our membership roster, call 810-335-3232.

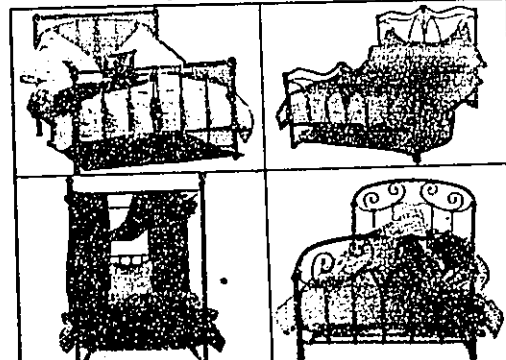


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Hours: Mon.-Sat. 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Thurs. 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Sun. Noon-5 p.m.

Shuptrine spotlights Stickley

Scott Shuptrine stores in Troy and Novi will host an entertaining presentation and informative seminar on the arts and crafts furniture phenomenon and Stickley furniture's role in its revival and inception.

The event will be 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 9, at 977 E. 14 Mile in Troy and 1 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 10, at 43606 W. Oak Drive in Novi. Admission is free. Seating is limited; call (810) 589-1100 for reservations by Wednesday, Sept. 6.

The presentation and seminar will be given by Carolyn Audi, director of corporate information from Stickley furniture. She is the daughter of Alfred and Amliny Audi, owners of the company.

Guests will learn more about the Stickley movement, its origins, the people behind the pieces and the unprecedented turnaround of Stickley. Refreshments will be served and prizes given out.

Nearly 100 years old, Stickley's fame has spread throughout and well beyond the country. The company plays a pivotal and leading role in reissuing the historic Mission Collection. Original Stickley pieces have been auctioned at Christie's for several hundred thousand dollars to celebrities and collectors.

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