Compliments of **North Bay Restoration \*Tim Lee\* 707.328.1223**

*How to Keep Natural Stone, Tile, & Concrete*

*Beautiful for Years to Come*

Owner’s Maintenance Guide

For

Marble, Limestone, Concrete,

Ceramic & Porcelain Tiles,

Granite, Travertine,

Terrazzo, Slate,

Pavers

Contrary to popular belief, natural stone, concrete, ceramic, and porcelain tiles DO REQUIRE ROUTINE MAINTENANCE. Although these hard surfaces seem strong and durable, in most cases, they’re more delicate and vulnerable than property owners realize. Unfortunately, improper care will quickly damage costly investments.

The following information provides basic concepts and simple tips for adequately caring for natural hard surfaces, helping to ensure their long-lasting radiant beauty.

Major Enemies of Hard Surfaces:

Eliminating these enemies will help prolong the life and luster of hard surfaces.

**Scratches & etching** caused by foot traffic, abrasive grit, moving furniture, vacuum cleaner wheels, and even pet’s toenails can slowly “sand down” surfaces, reducing their original radiance.

**Acidic cleaning products**are deadly to many hard surfaces. Liquids such as common bathroom cleaners, alcoholic and carbonated beverages, fruit juices, and vinegar will etch surfaces, dulling their appearance.

**Alkaline cleaning products** are the opposite of acids but no less destructive. Many household cleaners are alkaline-based and may be too harsh for natural surfaces—these agents commonly cause etching, dulling, and breakdown of sealants or coatings.

**Everyday household products** such as bar soaps (& some shampoos) are made from fats/oils that react with lye. Solid fats like coconut oil, palm oil, tallow (beef fat), or lard (pork fat) form firm soap bars that resist dissolving in water left in soap dishes. Minerals in water; such as calcium, magnesium, and silica, lock in the insoluble soap scum causing major cleaning issues on porous surfaces; especially grout, where the dreaded orange-black mold grows quickly.

**Stains**caused by various foods, drinks, oils, water deposits, hairsprays, pets, etc., may cause extensive damage. These materials can penetrate deep into porous surfaces, often creating stains that are impossible for property owners to remove without the aid of professionals and may even cause permanent discoloration.

How to Combat Major Hard-Surface Enemies:

The following are simple maintenance tips for property owners. Please know that conditions vary depending on natural stone, concrete, ceramic, or porcelain tile types. Usage consideration and environmental particulars are beneficial in developing your ideal maintenance programs, so please don’t hesitate to contact a local tile store or North Bay Restoration if you have questions.

Initial Protection:

All natural stone, concrete, ceramic, and porcelain tiles should be cleaned and sealed with a premium penetrative sealant. Ceramic and many porcelain tiles do not need sealant, but it’s essential for most grouts. CAUTION must be used to remove all existing grout haze, dirt, or stains before applying sealants, as these contaminants may become locked into porous surfaces by sealants. Also, be aware that color-enhancer sealants will permanently change the appearance of natural stone, grout, and concrete. If in doubt, call a local tile store or North Bay Restoration with any concerns before sealing.

The application of a high-quality sealant is a must for all kitchens and bathrooms where water or other liquids are commonly present. Proper sealants will provide barriers until spills or standing puddles can be removed. Premium, water-based, solvent-based, or silicon-based impregnator sealants will repel most short-term spills. These tend to be a bit costlier but are well worth the investment!

Do not assume builders, installers, or fabricators have already sealed hard surfaces. In most cases, sealants are not applied without the owner’s initiative. A quick test, by dripping a few drops of water onto the surface, will usually provide answers. If water drops bead up, as typically seen on a newly-waxed car, it’s probably safe to assume the surface has been sealed. If in doubt, please call us at North Bay Restoration.

General Precautionary Measures

Include the consistent use of coasters, trivets, or mats under glasses, dishes, pans, or any objects that may potentially scratch surfaces. Always blot up spills with clean towels as soon as possible, trying not to smear to reduce the possibility of staining—carefully dry surfaces to prevent small water puddles, which could leave mineral deposits.

Foot traffic will drag in sand and dirt daily, usually denser than elegant natural surfaces and grout. This “grit” is the leading cause of scratching and dulling. Grit must be kept off all surfaces, although ceramic and porcelain tile proves more durable than most natural stones. Entryway floors should provide walk-off mats that cover at least three adult steps. Remember to shake out or wash mats frequently. Be aware that some rubber-backed rugs can leave unwanted marks on natural surfaces, which, unfortunately, may require professional stripping to remove. So be sure to choose high-quality mats.

Cleaning & Maintenance

It’s a good habit to frequently dust surfaces with safe, untreated, natural fibers such as microfiber cloths, cotton towels, or mops. Routine damp mopping or light scrubbing with thin “white scuff pads” and a neutral conditioning cleaner will prove very beneficial. (NOTE: The color of scuff pads determines the intensity of abrasion, so be sure only to use white pads.) Always take care to dry surfaces thoroughly. These precautions aren’t as crucial for ceramic and porcelain tile.

Applying acrylic coatings or waxes is not advisable in most cases, as they tend to cause hazing effects and moisture-related problems like mildew. When added protection is necessary (where water is standard), surfaces may be polished with spray silicon-polymer waxes.

**Caution:** Wax is notorious for attracting dirt and grim; it should rarely be applied to the floor. A few exceptions apply to European finishes on pavers and some masonry surfaces. Also, wax on polished floors can cause slippage issues and quickly show wear patterns from foot traffic, turning the surface into a maintenance nightmare! If in doubt, please don’t hesitate to call us at North Bay Restoration.

To prevent substantial slippage hazards around exterior pool decks and patios, scrub surfaces with plain water and a mild bleach solution to remove algae and moss, or an algae de-blooming chemical, which may be purchased at most hardware stores or from the NBR website. We also provide an excellent non-slip system, which is explained in detail on our website:  [www.northbayrestoration.com](http://www.northbayrestoration.com).

**Remember:** Do not clean natural stone, grout, or concrete with vinegar, lemon, or other acidic agents. Do not use abrasive materials, such as dry powders or soft scrubs. Most cleaning products from general retail stores damage natural stone, grout, and concrete. Many do more harm than good, as with ordinary soap-scum-mildew removers, Lime Away, and CLR-type products, which seriously deteriorate natural stone and grout. NEVER USE acidic tub-tile cleaners, toilet-bowl cleaners, powdered alkaline cleaners, window cleaners, ammonia, alcohol, steel wool, or other highly abrasive pads.

Avoid cheap, commercial bar soaps, body washes, and shampoos. Choose glycerin-based, natural products instead. Even water alone can have long-term detrimental effects on some softer surfaces, such as marbles and grouts, leaving mineral deposits, dulling, and etch marks.

Again, it is essential to have all-natural hard surfaces protected with a high-quality penetrating sealant.

It’s always better to be safe than sorry! Use only products specifically formulated for natural hard surfaces, such as neutral cleaners with conditioning agents, special grout cleaners, and penetrating sealants. If questions arise about which products are best for specific applications, consult a local tile store or call North Bay Restoration.

**The Good News:** Once a regular maintenance program has been developed, the cleaning/maintenance process will become second nature. The benefits of owning natural surfaces (with their unique beauty and radiance) will far outweigh their need for extra care, but if desired, we’re just a phone call away.  We offer low-cost, routine, professional maintenance.

Choose a Professional to Protect Your Investment!

North Bay Restoration provides consultation, maintenance, and repair services for all natural stone, tile, and concrete. We’re also happy to answer installation, maintenance, or restoration questions. Taking time to educate our clients and help them protect their investments is regular business for North Bay Restoration. Our satisfied customers include property owners, builders, designers, realtors, and insurance companies. Give us a call at North Bay Restoration for creative, innovative solutions for all-natural hard surfaces.

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North Bay Restoration Natural Hard-Surface Specialists:

• Residential & Commercial • Creative Concrete Finishes • Estate Maintenance Management • Deep Cleaning, Pressure Washing, Grout Haze Removal • Applications of Sealants, Specialty Coats, & Color Stains • Tile Replacement, Natural-Stone Crack Repairs • Grout Repairs, Epoxy & Color Staining • Polishing, Honing, Grinding, Lippage Removal • Transparent Slip Protection • Consultation & Product Recommendations