

ROSAL Stones

Mediterranean at home

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1. The natural ageing of stone is part of its beauty - like wine, it improves with time. This ageing depends greatly on the environmental conditions to which the stone is subjected, and also on how it is used.

The orientation of the house will be a crucial factor and you will be able to observe how the stone reacts differently on each face (north, south, east, west).

The southern face will generally be the one that dries first and will retain its original appearance better, however the northern face will show how ageing is more pronounced in shadier places.

Contact with water planes will cause the appearance to change and age more quickly.

Stone will look its best in healthy environmental conditions, and the appearance of mosses on stone has even been used as an indicator of low pollution and ideal conditions for life.

2. Therefore, the best thing you can do to achieve a fully satisfactory result from the use of natural stone is to take into account the suitability of the chosen material for the environmental conditions and characteristics of the project right from the design phase, advised by your own technical expert. In general:

- Avoid areas of excessive moisture which don't have sufficient drainage
- Provide for rainwater run-off
- Minimise exposure to areas of excessive air pollution
- Minimise exposure to areas with an excessive concentration of dissolved salts in the water
- Keep swimming pool covers which have accumulated rainwater and dirt away from the pavement to avoid causing unnecessary damage.

All these situations can be addressed in the design phase, avoiding the appearance of later problems, for example by installing raised floors, adding gutters, corbels, or gargoyles to guttering or balconies, interposing natural hedges, etc.

The waterproofing treatments marketed by various chemical companies may be useful to delay certain harmful effects. However, such treatments are never perfect so they will not prevent the stone from reacting to extreme conditions and will, in any case, require subsequent maintenance to ensure their continued effectiveness.

In recent years, salt chlorination in swimming pools has proven to be aggressive towards any material, including natural stone, so we recommend installing a hydrolysis device that will reduce the concentration of salt. We also suggest that you carry out periodic cleaning with fresh water, particularly in areas where use is frequent or intense, to avoid the accumulation of salts on the surface.

The waterproofing treatment will not be enough to prevent attack by salts accumulated on the surface, so periodic cleaning is essential.

2. As for subsequent stains or accidental damage, the stone continues its process of formation even after you have installed it, so, although it may be difficult to believe on many occasions, the stone is capable of absorbing stains and you will discover that they disappear over time.

For encrusted stains, in most cases an effective treatment is washing with hot water at controlled pressure.

Chemical products are also available on the market, such as:

For green or black mould stains caused by stagnant water, or stains of organic origin, it is effective to spray them with bleach or, for more extreme cases, sodium hypochlorite (which is the same active agent but in higher concentration). Brushing with a stiff-bristled brush may be appropriate, rinsing afterwards with plenty of water.

Be careful with pressurised water, abrasives and acidic products, both those commonly used and those marketed as descalers, as when applied directly to stone they can alter its texture. Always test their effect on an inconspicuous area before using them.

3. In more extreme cases such as graffiti, sandblasting may be the only solution currently available. You can buy products which are called anti-graffiti treatments, however although they can make the removal of graffiti somewhat easier they do not totally prevent aerosols from penetrating the stone.

Natural sedimentary stone is 'manufactured' naturally in the earth's crust, under normal environmental conditions of climate, pressure, temperature etc., so that, when subjected only to cutting processes, the stone is in a sense still alive.

As such, it will be transformed throughout its many years of useful life. If you are a lover of natural products, you will undoubtedly enjoy this evolution...