



Simple care and maintenance of any floor is of grave importance to preserve the natural beauty for years to come, says **Rohit F. Pinto**, CEO, StoneTech Services, while speaking to *Clean India Journal* about floorcare.

On Track with Natural Stone

Amongst all flooring materials, none is more elegant and luxurious than natural stone. Common natural stone floors include slate, marble, limestone, travertine, granite, and sandstone with a slight variance in properties. Natural stone flooring in residences, offices, or even in commercial buildings is an investment that adds value to any structure for many years in terms of beauty.

There are three primary stone finishes:

- A polished finish; a glossy surface that reflects light & emphasizes on color
- A honed finish; a satin smooth surface with relatively little reflection of light. Generally preferred on floors & stairs and where heavy traffic will wear off the polished finish.

- A flamed finish; a rough textured surface used frequently on granite floors.

However, many other finishes are available and used throughout the world.

It is always sensible to maintain careful records of the type, name, and origin of the stone at your facility.

Maintenance of Natural Stone

General cleaners are not specifically formulated for natural stone. It is never recommended to be used especially if the stone has been treated with a stone sealer as these can breakdown the sealer, thereby removing its protective properties and making the stone and grout stain.

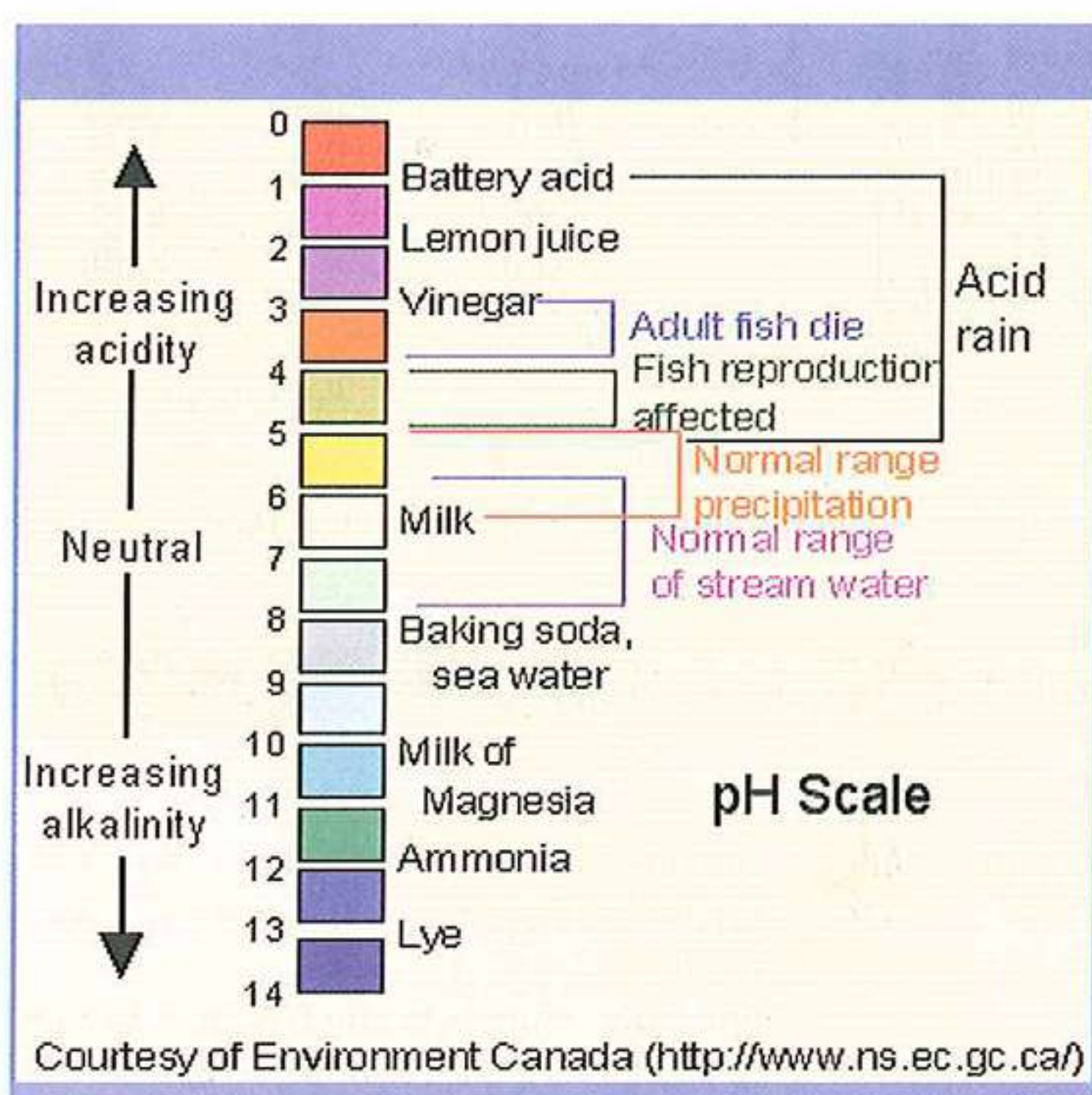
Moreover, many cleaning products, including those that contain vinegar, bleach, lemon or ammonia can etch away the polish & discolor the surface.

Various cleaners have what is called a cleaning agent embedded in them. This agent breaks down and dissolves minerals in hard water. Since all stone is made up of minerals, these types of cleaners will dissolve and cause streaks over prolonged use.

It is highly recommended to use a stone cleaner with a neutral pH value.

Every flooring application is one of a kind, as stone is a unique creation of the Earth's making.

Easily accessible stone surfaces such as walkways, fountains and steps, should be kept free of debris and soil by periodically sweeping and washing with water. Normal maintenance should include periodic inspection of stone surfaces for structural defects, movement, deterioration, or staining.



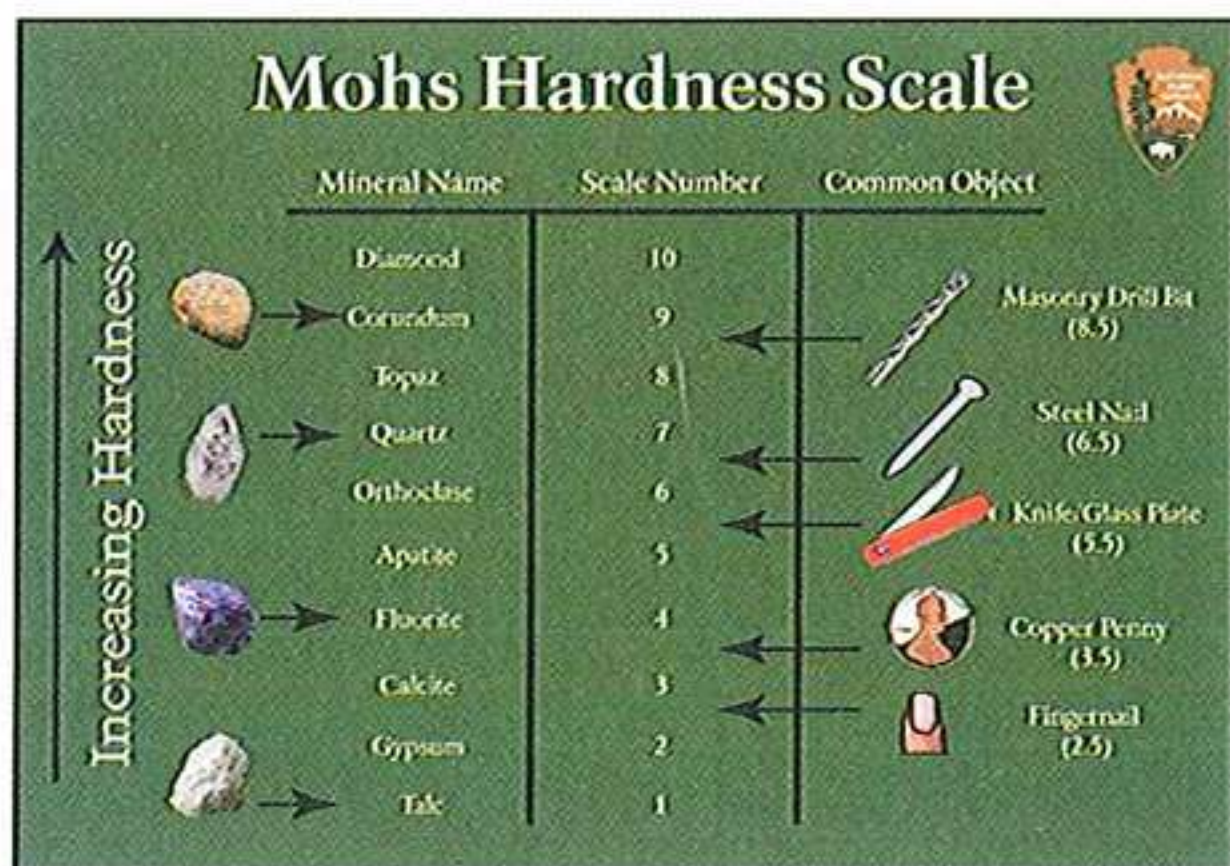
For exterior stone maintenance - a larger extent of stone generally found on exterior applications makes it unworkable to perform normal maintenance on a frequent basis and should at least be given periodic overall cleaning to eliminate a lengthy buildup.

General Guidelines for Stain Removal

- Remove any loose debris.
- Blot spills; wiping the area will spread the spill.
- Flush the area with plain water and mild soap and rinse several times.
- Dry the area thoroughly with a soft cloth.
- Repeat as necessary.

Recommended Care and cleaning procedures

- Sand, dirt, and grit do the most damage to natural stone surfaces due to its aggressively direct impact. A suitable door matting system internally and externally at entrances will help minimize the sand, dirt, and grit that will scratch any stone floor. Ensure that the underside of the mat or rug is a non-slip surface.
- If the stain remains, persists or is a problem that appears too difficult to treat, call your stone care professional.



Oxidation

Natural stone materials are formed beneath the earth over millions of years, and often contain a variety of distinct elements. If iron is present in these materials, it may be a common problem on white marble stone. After a period of time most white marble will form a light brown patch which eventually forms a dark cloud like layer. This is due to the contents of iron which reacts with moisture beneath and above the surface - commonly termed as 'rusting'. A preventive measure for this problem would be to properly waterproof the surface prior to installation. In most instances people do face this problem after installation and in this case a treatment with a good penetrating sealer above the surface will be a solution in most cases.

- Dust mop floors frequently, using a clean, dry dust mop.
- Clean surfaces with mild detergent or a neutral stone cleaner.
- Thoroughly rinse and dry the surface with clear water after washing.
- Blot up spills immediately.
- Do not use vinegar, lemon juice, or other cleaners containing acids on marble, limestone, travertine, or onyx surfaces.
- Do not use cleaners that contain acid such as bathroom cleaners, grout cleaners, or tub & tile cleaners.
- Do not mix chemicals together unless directions specifically instruct

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