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Terracotta Care and Maintenance

Terracotta is a flooring of great aesthetic appeal. Due to its main structural characteristics, terracotta is generally very porous. Marcotta Outdoor Solutions recommends Spirit Marble & Tile Care Spirit System to gain maximum value from terracotta.

Spirit Treatment System is designed to protect against staining. The treatment is based upon the use of synthetic sealers and waxes, which ensure complete and uniform impregnation, and easy maintenance while brightening the terracotta and exalting its aesthetic qualities. It therefore differs from alternative treatments based on linseed oil which gives rise to floors with light and dark stains, stickiness and problematic maintenance, or varnishes which are easily "scored" glassy finishes and problematic maintenance. Another alternative are oil-based sealers, which because they will not allow the tile to "breathe", cannot be applied until a minimum of 40 days after laying and hence exposing the floor to staining.

Method of Installation:

Marcotta Outdoor Solutions recommends tilers who are familiar with terracotta and we strongly suggest their employment. If other tilers are employed, it is important tiles are laid correctly. We recommend terracotta is fixed with glues as opposed to a mortar bed. This method minimizes the amount of efflorescence (salt, which is inherent in a sand/cement base, is dissolved by water. This salt in vapor form, is absorbed by the tile and forms on the surface as a white deposit). Simply, less water used in the installation means less efflorescence. It is also important to make sure the tiler "works clean" while the tile is in this highly porous state, i.e., careful with finger marks, foot marks and even pen or guide marks, as they may prove impossible to remove. We does not recommend that tiles be dipped in water.

Grout Smear Removal:

New installation should be cleaned and allowed to dry prior to sealing. Should the surfaces have

a grout smear or materials that are mineral based then *Spirit Phosphoric Acid Cleaner* should be used. *Spirit Phosphoric Acid Cleaner* diluted approximately 8 parts water to 1 part acid this will remove most grouting.

Sealing:

- *Spirit Water-based Premium Seal* or *Spirit Premium Seal* (solvent-based) can be used to final seal the tiles and grout to protect the stone from staining.
- *Spirit Glossy Seal* can be used on floors internally to achieve a gloss finish; this product should **NOT** be used in bathrooms where slip resistance is needed.

Internal Gloss Seal

After 48 hours the grout will be adequately dry to apply 2 thin coats of *Spirit Premium Seal* or *Spirit Water-Based Premium Seal* using a lambs wool applicator or clean, white, lint free cotton cloth with a minimum of one hours interval between coats. REMEMBER TO TEST A SMALL AREA FIRST. After the sealer has dried, apply a small amount of water to the surface to check that the tile is sealed. If not, the sealer may need time to cure, or additional sealer may need to be applied.

24 hours after the sealer has dried, lightly clean the tile to remove the beading effect from the tile using *Spirit Neutral Cleaner*. Allow the floor to dry and apply 2 thin coats of *Spirit Glossy Seal*.

Internal & External Natural Finish

The best stain resistance is achieved when *Spirit Premium Seal* or *Spirit Water-Based Premium Seal* is applied after all the grout smear has been removed and the floor is clean and dry. Apply with lambs wool or white cotton cloth. Two thin applications are necessary, applied in cross direction (north to south, then east to west). As *Spirit Premium Seal* is a "Fluro" chemical, it evaporates rapidly when exposed to the air resulting in inexperienced people to apply it too thickly and sometimes ineffectively. Shake out any excess *Spirit Premium Seal* from your applicator and apply ONE very thin coat in one direction. This one coat is ALMOST enough to seal the tile, but because the grain of the tile may cause the applicator to miss some spots, apply another coat in the other direction.. Also use a covered tray to minimise loss to the atmosphere and keep only the minimum amount necessary in the tray.

IMPORTANT: Test seal a small area before completing the whole job to ensure your technique is right and you are happy with the final result.

Maintenance:

The maintenance of the tile is an integral part of the treatment and correct maintenance is just as

important as correct sealing. Generally the continued enjoyment of your floor will require a weekly to fortnightly mopping with a solution of two caps full of *Spirit Neutral Cleaner* in a bucket of warm water. It is important to use *Spirit Neutral Cleaner* only, as this cleaner is neither acidic nor alkaline (which can damage sealers when used everyday).

If a potential stain causing spillage occurs, it should be wiped up immediately. However, some staining may still occur as sealers are not impervious to ALL substances. However, with the *Spirit Premium Seal and Spirit Glossy Seal* system, the substances may penetrate the top coats, but as the tile is now sealed, the stain will be kept close to the surface making it easy to remove. To do this, apply *Spirit Neutral Cleaner* first. If this is unsuccessful, apply *Spirit HDC*. This should remove the stain, however if a glossy seal has been used it will necessitate the re-application of at least 3 coats of *Spirit Glossy Seal* as it will have fulfilled its role as a "sacrificial coat" and will subsequently have been removed.

Specific Cleaning Requirements:

Grout Smear, Rust & Oxide

- *Spirit Phosphoric Acid* can be used; the tile should always be rinsed thoroughly with *Spirit Neutral Cleaner* to neutralize the acid

Heavy Soiling, Oils & Soap Scum

- *Spirit H.D.C* or *Spirit Porcelain Crème Cleaner* can be used to remove heavy soiling from the grout and stone

Efflorescence, Salts & Minerals

- *Spirit Efflorescence Off* should be used to remove stubborn salts and minerals

Mould, Mildew, leaf marks, Tannin, animal droppings

- *Spirit Bright As* should be used to remove these organic substances

Scuff marks & Pencil marks

- *Spirit Porcelain Crème Cleaner* should be used to remove these types of marks

Removing paint or acrylic coating

- *Spirit Safe Stripper* is best at removing acrylic paint and coatings from the tiles

General everyday cleaning

- *Spirit Neutral Cleaner* or *Spirit Rejuvenate* is the ideal maintenance cleaner

