

How can I remove efflorescence from Eromosa stone and prevent it from coming back?

Q. After we applied a color enhancer to our Eromosa stone (from Owen Sound, Ontario), we noticed some efflorescence. Not sure if it was there before the enhancer was applied. Is there any way to get rid of it?

A. What you're seeing is very common, and it makes sense that efflorescence became noticeable right after the color enhancer was applied. A color enhancer deepens and enriches the natural tones of the stone, which in turn makes any white, powdery efflorescence stand out much more clearly against the darker surface.

Efflorescence can usually be removed, and many homeowners can handle the cleanup themselves. However, the first and most important step is identifying where the moisture is coming from, since moisture is the root cause of efflorescence.

When moisture moves through stone or setting materials, it picks up natural salts along the way. When moisture eventually finds its way to the surface, the water evaporates, leaving the salts behind.

As long as the stone is in good shape, efflorescence is usually safe to address on your own. The first step is to let the stone dry thoroughly. Use a clean, stiff-bristle (not wire) brush to loosen the salts from the surface. Sweep away the powder. Very often this alone removes most or all of the efflorescence.

If residue remains, lightly damp mopping with clean water or a pH-neutral, stone-safe cleaner may help. Do not use alkaline cleaners, which can introduce more salts.

Hopefully this will resolve the problem. Eromosa can absorb moisture, so if

there's moisture coming from the setting materials or anything else coming into contact with the stone, the salts will keep migrating to the surface until the stone dries out. You may need to repeat these steps for weeks or even months until the stone finishes drying and the salts are depleted. Since color enhancer has already been applied to your stone, this could delay the process.

NOTE: If there is a moisture problem, the efflorescence will persist. If left unresolved, this can cause a different and potentially costly problem called subflorescence, where salts crystallize inside the stone instead of escaping to the surface. Flaking or spalling can result, especially in freeze/thaw climates like Ontario. Moisture management is essential. You may need to consult with a general contractor who has experience in drainage and building envelope issues or a plumber, if there's a leak.

It would be worthwhile to contact a stone restoration professional to evaluate your stone before reapplying color enhancers or sealers. They can check the stone with a moisture meter to be sure it is dry and the efflorescence has run its course. To find a vetted PRO in your area, visit www.surfacecarepros.com and click on **Find a PRO**. Your PRO can select and properly apply the most appropriate color enhancers or sealers.

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