

The beauty of nature, within your reach.

Impressions in **STONE**

Frequently Asked Questions

You've got questions, and hopefully we've got the answers! We appreciate your taking the time to learn more about how our products can fit into your project, and we hope you'll find what you're looking for right here.

I've never heard of "manufactured stone". Is this a new product?

Actually, this product has been around for several decades. Despite this fact, it is surprising just how few people—even builders—realize that this product exists and that it makes a wonderful alternative to the real thing. Recent advances in the manufacturing process have improved both the quality and the appearance of manufactured stone, along with lowering the cost. It can be used in just about any sort of building project—commercial/residential, new construction/remodeling, interior/exterior, and landscaping.

What are some of the more common uses for manufactured stone?

Most people use it to enhance the exterior appearance of their home, office, or commercial building. But we provide stone for a lot of other kinds of projects too, like interior fireplaces, outdoor kitchens, retaining walls, wine cellars, and so forth.

Why is manufactured stone a good option?

Just about everybody loves the look of natural stone. But real stone is extremely heavy, expensive, and time consuming to build with. Our stone gets around all of these limitations... it's kind of like 3-dimensional wallpaper, and any sturdy wall will do. Plus, since we make it custom to order in our Tulsa facility, you can get colors and styles that you'd be hard pressed to find anywhere else, including custom colors to fit your specific design needs. You can also use it in places where natural stone just won't work, particularly in interior applications like kitchens or decorative walls.

What exactly is manufactured stone, and how do you make it?

Manufactured stone is a cast cement product that is designed to look and feel like the real thing. The manufacturing process starts with the creation of a set of rubber molds. We carefully select high-quality, representative natural stones with varying shapes and textures—the kind that will give lots of visual interest to the finished projects our customers wish to create. We then use these stones as masters to create our molds. Once the molds are ready, we prepare a mixture of Portland cement, lightweight aggregate, water, and iron oxide color pigments, and then pour this mixture into the molds. We use a number of techniques to achieve the coloring and shade variations that each customer wants. Once the mixture dries, we remove the finished stone product from the mold. We then cure the finished product for a period of several days, and finally ship it to the customer.

What form does the finished product take—do I get individual stones or is it pre-formed into some sort of panel?

All of our stone styles are delivered as individual stones, just as if you had purchased natural stone. The only difference is that our stone features a flat back surface that simplifies installation.

What about pattern repetition?

At Impressions in Stone, no two molds are ever cast from the same stone. This ensures that your project will achieve the look of natural stone with no noticeable pattern repetition. Of course, your installer must also strive to avoid grouping large numbers of similarly sized/shaped stones together to achieve the best results.

Where can I go to see how your stone is being used?

We suggest that your first stop should be our showroom where we can show you our stone samples and photos of projects we've done. When you come, please bring any items that you've already selected for your project, such as brick, tile, shingles, and so forth. Our personnel can help you identify the stone styles and colors that will best complement your selected project materials. If you have photos of stone projects that you like, bring them in as well so we can help you find a close match. Once we've narrowed down your options a bit, we can direct you to nearby homes or offices that have used the product(s) you are considering.

What kind of cost am I looking at for a complete project—materials, labor, etc?

This question is rather difficult to answer, because we really have to fall back on the old "it depends" routine. But let's start with the big picture... you basically have three choices when it comes to attractive, three-dimensional surfacing options: brick, natural stone, and manufactured stone.

Of these three options, brick is going to be the most cost-effective in virtually any circumstance. The only real exception might be an interior application where a suitable foundation does not already exist (a second floor fireplace, for instance). Brick is very heavy and it requires a solid foundation or footing to support its weight. If a foundation needs to be built to support the project, the project cost can go up dramatically.

Next on the cost-effectiveness scale is manufactured stone. The product is classified as an "adhered veneer" due to its light weight (approximately 10 pounds per square foot). As such, it requires no footings, wall ties, or foundations and is therefore ideal for both interior and exterior applications. It can be applied to any properly prepared, structurally sound wall surface such as wood, wallboard, masonry, or metal. So there are almost never any "hidden costs" associated with installing the product. On the other hand, the product generally requires some surface preparation. It also calls for an installer with a fair amount of artistic skill to achieve a high-quality, visually appealing result.

Last is natural stone, which is extremely heavy (thus requiring a suitable foundation, as with brick) and requires a highly skilled installer (even more so than with manufactured stone). In addition, if the stone you want is not indigenous to your local area, you'll pay premium shipping charges to get it to your work site. It also takes much more time to install than brick or manufactured stone—because of the weight, installers must lay a couple of feet, then allow the section to fully set up before continuing with the next

section. A project that takes just a few days with brick or manufactured stone will take weeks with real stone. Thus, its only real advantage is the ephemeral satisfaction of knowing that it is indeed “natural”.

What about numbers? Each project is different and will require a quote from a qualified installer. That said, here are some broad price ranges:

<u>Material</u>	<u>Basic Material Cost</u>	<u>Installed Cost</u>
Brick	\$2.00 - \$2.50 per sq ft	\$4.00 - \$5.00 per sq ft
Manufactured Stone	\$2.95 - \$4.25 per sq ft	\$6.50 - \$11.50 per sq ft
Natural Stone	\$2.00 - \$6.00 per sq ft	\$10.00 - \$20.00 per sq ft

I like the “stacked stone” look. Do I have to use a grout line with your products?

Using a grout line produces a more traditional, more formal look, while the drystack (i.e., no grout line) technique produces a more rustic look that is very popular these days. Our Cobblestone, Hackett, and Ledgestone styles can be installed with or without a grout line according to your aesthetic preference. The Fieldstone and River Rock styles cannot be drystacked due to the shape irregularities inherent in these styles. Finally, while it may seem intuitively obvious that a grout line enhances the overall structural soundness of the installation, we have seen no hard evidence that this is actually the case. The bond created between the back of the stone and the substrate is plenty strong enough to support the stones without a grout line. So, the choice becomes a purely aesthetic one.

Do I have to put on a scratch coat before I start hanging the stone?

A scratch coat is a thin layer of masonry mortar that is applied to the lath wire and allowed to dry overnight. This creates a hard, flat, smooth surface to attach the stones to. While there is no universal agreement on the necessity of a scratch coat, most professional installers use one. A good reason why this is the case is that sometimes the lath can buckle if it is not secured very snugly to the wall surface, and if it does buckle, the movement can cause a newly placed stone to fall off the wall. Another reason is that it can be difficult to place stones—especially the Ledgestone style stones—in those areas where the bare lath overlaps. So the scratch coat can make the installation process go a bit more smoothly, but as far as the structural soundness of your project is concerned, a scratch coat is really optional.

How long does it take to install?

Manufactured stone installation requires a bit more time than brick, but substantially less time than natural stone. As a general guideline, a seasoned installation professional can cover about 100 to 150 square feet of surface area per day.

How far out from the substrate does the completed stone surface extend?

Our stones average about 1¼ inches in thickness, plus or minus about ¼ inch. By the time you get the felt paper, the lath, the mortar, and the stones attached, the total thickness of the completed stone surface is about 1¾ to 2 inches deep.

How does manufactured stone hold up over time?

The product is just about as durable as any surfacing product you can buy. Our stone products are designed to provide many years of service with no noticeable discoloration or surface texture degradation. We are so confident in the quality and soundness of our products that we offer a 50-Year Limited Warranty (see our web site for more details on our Warranty).

Are there any special maintenance requirements?

No, our products are designed to be essentially maintenance-free. You would maintain them the same way you maintain brick or stone—with an occasional wash to remove surface dust and debris.

Do I have to apply a sealer to your products?

Because our product is made of concrete, it will absorb water just like any other concrete surface. Over time, the repeated absorption of water in a freeze/thaw cycle can potentially cause permanent damage to the stone. Since manufactured stone is reserved for use in vertical (wall) applications, water usually doesn't have the chance to sit on the surface long enough to cause a problem. Stone laid at ground level, however, may be at greater risk. A sealer will help to close the pores in the concrete, thereby repelling the water rather than allowing it to be absorbed. Is a sealer an absolute must? Probably not. Is it a good idea? In implementations where standing water could potentially cause a problem, absolutely. So, consider a sealer as a very inexpensive and convenient insurance policy against future damage. Please note that some sealers are designed to "enhance" the surface appearance of the concrete, while others are essentially invisible. Be sure to test your sealer on a small test portion of our stone to ensure that the final appearance is what you're looking for. While we can't make specific recommendations on brands, we suggest that you always use a high-quality, breathable masonry sealer in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Can I use your products to build a walkway?

No, our products are designed to be used only as a wall surfacing material. They are too thin to reliably sustain the rigors of a paving application where shifting soil, heavy traffic, and so forth take their toll.

Can I use your products on wall areas adjacent to swimming pools?

Our products will hold up at least as well as any other high quality, lightweight concrete material in this application. If you wish to use our products in this type of application, we recommend that you apply a breathable masonry sealer to the finished surface. However, please remember that any material—concrete or natural—will eventually fade due to continued exposure to chlorine and other chemicals.