

On the Home Front

Bi-monthly column by: Linda Skolnick

Grout Revived

Are you enjoying the beauty and ease attached to ceramic and stone flooring? They are touted as requiring minimal care...but what about the wearing and staining of the grout that keeps them in place. The grouting material used to cement individual tiles and stones is more porous than the actual flooring and prone to discoloration from entrapped dirt particles. Regrouting is messy, time consuming and, because it is best left to professionals...expensive.

Fortunately, homeowners can take advantage of products such as Aqua Mix Grout Colorant, Versatile Color & Sealant, and Hydroment Grout Stain to retint existing grout. Available at tile and hardware stores, these epoxy-based liquids come in a gamut of colors and afford a quick fix that yields long-term results.

Aqua Mix, for example, boasts an expected wear time of 15 years under normal conditions.

If you plan to color your grout, follow the manufacturer's directions for removing existing sealants and contaminants that would inhibit proper bonding of the tint. Before applying the colorant to an entire floor, treat a small test area in an inconspicuous location to ensure you're satisfied with your chosen shade.

The colorant itself should be applied directly to the grout joints in thin, even coats to minimize the amount of colorant spread on tiles. Second and third applications may be needed if grout is being tinted from dark to light. Allow at least two hours of drying time between coats.

After a recommended drying period, usually between 2 and 24 hours, you'll need to use water and a nylon scrubber to remove excess tint material from the tiles. Allow a cure period of 2-3 weeks before direct scrubbing....and then...enjoy your rejuvenated floor!