

Simulating Stone

By Patricia La Pointe

Lady Alisoun Fortescue of Maplehurst

The best material I've found for simulating stone is cork. There are two commonly available forms of cork: sheet and wall tile. Wall tile is preferable because it is over 0.5" in thickness, as opposed to the 0.25" thickness of sheet cork.

The advantages of cork is that it is light in weight and it is waterproof. It also has an irregular, particulate surface, which

resembles cut and polished travertine marble if painted in appropriate colors and varnished to a semigloss finish. Cork can be carved, sawn, burned and abraded to produce a variety of other textures. It also can be laminated using any wood glue.

Cork is superb insulating material, and also is used for soundproofing.

The use of cork to simulate stonework is not my original idea. At the Cathedral of St. Peter in Albany, N.Y., some of the interior stonework has been simulated with painted cork. This was installed more than 50 years ago, when the funding was not available to complete the cathedral as origi-

nally intended. The funding has never become available, and the cork is still in place. It is repainted periodically, and it has withstood well, considering that the nave is still covered by a temporary roof that was installed when the cork was put in. I spoke with a member of the vestry about this cork, and he indicated that they have no plans to replace it in the foreseeable future.

I would like to know if any readers know of sources for cork in larger blocks, such as 2" or 4" thicknesses? This would be ideal for simulations of high relief stonework.

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