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TEATREE HANDMADE TERRACOTTA – Fixing & Sealing Guidelines

Teatree Terracotta looks aged and full of rustic character from the first day of laying once sealed. This tile is entirely handmade, therefore no two tiles are the same. They originate from China, where they are used extensively in traditional dwellings, coffee shops etc and closely resemble the uncontrived, handmade terracotta used in this country hundreds of years ago.

These tiles have all the characteristics associated with a handmade tile – beautiful colour tone variation, minor structural deficiencies such as pitting, nooks and crannies on surface and edge, together with the advantage of the clay being able to retain heat. This floor will never be ice cold to the touch. Stated sizes are nominal and imprecise and there can be different porosity within a batch.

PRIOR TO FIXING – Please inspect the tiles as soon as they arrive. This will give you a chance to rub down any chipped edges with an emery cloth, or in severe cases with the edge of another terracotta tile. The clay tends to come in ‘batches’ and tiles of a similar clay tone are best separated and mixed to produce the most attractive overall effect. Make sure the sub-floor is sound, level and clean – free from dust and paint etc. If laying on a concrete floor, we recommend you use a cement based adhesive. It is important that sufficient adhesive is used to enable the tiles to be well ‘bedded’ without hollows beneath. Make sure the correct adhesive and grouting is used for your specific requirements (i.e underfloor heating, old concrete may need priming with PVA first etc) – check with manufacturer/tiler. New concrete floors should not have tiles laid until completely dry – approx 4 weeks (see manufacturers recommendations).

If tiling onto a wooden floor, the floor has to be sound with no flexing. If there is any movement we recommend overboarding with either 18mm plywood or specific backer boards. Flexible adhesives and grouts must be used (refer to manufacturers recommendations) and correct board fixings.

FIXING – Only proceed to lay tiles when sub floor is completely dry and free of contamination (dust etc). We recommend buttering the backs of the terracotta with the adhesive and applying a thick bed of notch trowelled adhesive to the floor, then sandwich the tile onto the floor adhesive, alleviating any air pockets. One tends to space these tiles by eye as they are slightly irregular. Allow the correct drying time for the adhesive (as per manufacturers instructions) prior to sealing/grouting.

FIRST STAGE SEALING – When the tiles have been laid and are securely stuck and are completely dry from cutting (usually a wet cutter is used) and clean of any dust or mineral salts activated by damp, only then should you start the sealing process. Establish first the porosity of your terracotta i.e how many coats of boiled linseed oil it will absorb, prior to general application – experiment on one tile. As a rule, this clay usually takes between 3 or 4 coats.

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Apply the boiled linseed oil sparingly with a paintbrush, leaving **5 hours** between coats. THE OIL IS DESIGNED TO SOAK INTO THE TILE, THUS FILLING PORES FROM WITHIN. THE OIL THEN OXIDISES (HARDENS) WITHIN THE PORES WHEN LEFT FOR THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF TIME BETWEEN COATS. IF AT ANY STAGE THE OIL DOES NOT SOAK INTO THE CLAY AFTER **15 MINUTES** OF APPLICATION, (THIS MEANS THE CLAY HAS FOUND ITS SATURATION POINT) **THE EXCESS MUST BE WIPED OFF THE SURFACE** BEFORE IT OXIDISES. Wipe any excess oil off surface using a soft fluff-free cloth and Genuine Turpentine. **DISPOSE OF OILY RAGS CAREFULLY AS THEY CAN SPONTANIOUSLY COMBUST.** If the oil has been left too long, has hardened or is tacky on the surface and cannot be removed with Genuine Turpentine - use LTP POWERSTRIPPER (refer to manufactures instructions).

Leave 24 hours after the final application of oil, before applying LTP ANTIQUE BEESWAX. Apply sparingly, rubbing in with a fluff-free cloth, then buff with a soft brush or buffing machine.

GROUTING - We recommend grouting 24hrs after the wax application when the tile is completely dry. Grout the joints using a good proprietary wide joint grout and remove surplus grout before it is cured. After allowing the floor to dry, dust off any residual grout from the surface, making sure that all grouting smears have been removed. Should you be unable to get some of the grout off, use LTP GROUTSTAIN REMOVER. Use sparingly and again allow the floor to dry. Do not use this product near stainless steel refer to manufacturers instructions.

FINAL STAGE SEALING - Finally, when the grout has cured/dried (as per manufacturers instructions), apply a second light coat of LTP ANTIQUE BEESWAX over the tile and grout joints (this will darken and age the grout as well) rubbing in with a fluff-free cloth, then buff up by using a soft brush or buffing machine to produce lustre. Protect from water for 24 hours and do not wash surfaces for at least 3 days.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE - Do not wash your floor with detergents or bleach as these will strip the waxes. We recommend you sweep the floor, then use LTP WAXWASH for general cleaning and maintenance once a week. Wipe up messes with a rag or sponge (you can use a little Dettol if you require a disinfectant). If the floor has been blemished slightly, apply a little more LTP ANTIQUE BEESWAX, allow to dry, then buff to polish. The beeswax layer should ideally be regularly maintained as it is this that provides the primary floor protection. Where the floor surface dulls, buff well. When the surface will not buff, more wax will be required.

The foregoing advice, whilst given in good faith and from experience gained in various installation situations is for guidance purposes only. If in doubt at any stage of floor laying, experiment before proceeding further or seek further advice. Neither the supplier nor the manufacturers will be liable for any dissatisfaction resulting from these instructions nor will they in any circumstances accept responsibility for any damaged or incorrect tiles once they have been fixed.