



The Craftsman Home Remodeling blog has been nominated as **Best Remodeling Blogger** in the 2010 JDR Industry Blogger Awards! Please [vote for us here](#) today!

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*Below are questions I have received since starting the construction and this web site. I have tried my best to answer them. Please feel free to comment and rate them, and [ask me any other questions](#) you may have.*

- **Updated** What tile did you use in your master bedroom fireplace and kitchen?
- **Updated** How did you handle asbestos removal in your older home?
- **Updated** Can you give me a cost breakdown for the job?
- **Updated** Can you recommend a siding contractor?
- **Updated** What was the cost of your remodel?
- **Updated** How do you like your soapstone? Has it scratched much? How often do you oil it?
- **Updated** What are the costs of doing plaster vs drywall? Do you have any preference between the two?
- **Updated** What kind of soapstone did you use?
- **Updated** I would like any input you would be willing to give me regarding saving money. I have a budget.
- **Updated** How's the steam shower working? Are you glad you installed one? Can you use it with and without steam?
- **Updated** I plan on putting pyramid-style columns on the front porch but am unsure of the dimensions. I noticed that you have these type of columns on your rear porch and was wondering if you could tell me the dimensions?
- **Updated** I would like to know about the supports you had installed for your counter overhang.
- **Updated** Who is the manufacturer of the front door and where can I purchase it?
- **Updated** What window company did you use?
- **Updated** Did you use Seagrass limestone in addition to your soapstone? If so, can you please comment on how practical it has been to live with in a working/real kitchen in terms of staining and marking?
- **Updated** I'm wondering if you will share the paint brand and colors used on the exterior of your home?

**What tile did you use in your master bedroom fireplace and kitchen?**

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The master bedroom fireplace tile is made up of two different tiles; the green squares/borders and the ginkgo borders/dots. Here are the numbers from my invoice.

62 sq ft – 71/ 4x4 Opal  
56 pcs – 71/ 6" Quarter Round – Opal  
20 pcs – 71/ 2 1/2x6 Cornice #1 – Opal  
15 pcs – 172/ 2x8 Ginkgo Border: Hand Painted

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11 pcs – 172/ 2x2 Gingko: Hand Painted



The kitchen tile is as follows, again off the invoice:

35 sheets – 167/ 1x2 Offset: custom blend 80% #05 Sandstone, 20% #08 Harvest Iridescent  
5 sheets – 167/ 1x1 #08 Harvest Iridescent  
45 pcs – 167/ 1x1 Quarter Round #05 Sandstone  
50 pcs – 167/ 1x1 Quarter Round #08 Harvest Iridescent  
5 pcs – 167/ 1x8 Quarter Round #08 Harvest Iridescent  
42 pcs – 167/ 2x8 Canopy Liner #08 Harvest Iridescent



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**How did you handle asbestos removal in your older home?**

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### **Asbestos Removal and Greener Alternatives**

There are many things to consider when remodeling or purchasing an older home. Homes built before 1980 have the strong likelihood of containing asbestos. Due to a steady progression of technology and green sustainable methods, there are many ways to ensure your home or property is asbestos free. If you are interested in saving money, remodeling and improving your carbon footprint, here is some information to get you on the right track.

Used in millions of homes throughout the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, asbestos insulation can

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become a real dilemma for homeowners due to causing a variety of health problems, including [Peritoneal Mesothelioma](#) and [Malignant Mesothelioma](#). These types of cancer take the lives of thousands each year.

Non-regulated asbestos material can be legally performed by homeowners, regular contractors, or licensed asbestos abatement contractors as long as the [National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants](#) (NESHAP) are not violated. Asbestos removal in public facilities, homes and workplaces must be undertaken by a licensed asbestos abatement contractor. Once the removal is complete, green insulation options should be given serious consideration, such as: Cellulose, Cotton Fiber and Lcynene.

The [United States Green Building Council](#) (USGBC), in a study conducted in 2003, estimated a savings of \$50-\$65 per square foot for well-constructed green buildings in the U.S. (see table below) during that year. The numbers continue to improve as more eco-friendly options become available, and those kinds of figures have finally begun to attract those who thought eco-friendly construction was just a bunch of hogwash.

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**Can you give me a cost breakdown for the job?**

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I don't actually have a breakdown yet. I will work on a percentage breakdown by area such as Demo, Foundation, Framing, Plumbing, Electrical, Landscaping, etc. and get it here eventually.

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**We are planning to replace the wood shingle siding on our bungalow home. Our home is a Greene and Greene style home built in 1917, so we want to maintain the classic design. Can you recommend a siding contractor?**

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The siding contractors I used are a father and son team, Bill and Dave Barr, respectively. They were absolutely amazing and they worked out really well here because not only were they quick and efficient but their attention to detail was on par with mine.

For Bill Barr's contact info please see the [Contractors Used](#) page.

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### **What was the cost of your remodel?**

I would rather not say the total cost I spent on this. Let's just say it was several times the original budget. My thoughts were 'how many chances do you get in your life to do something like this'. It was at that time that the budget took a backseat to doing it as authentically as possible. On the job site I would tell the workers to get out of the mindset that they were building a house and think of it as a work of art. No details were too small.

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**I am so excited about my soapstone and was happy to see how fantastic yours looks. So, do**

**you like it? Has it scratched much? How often do you oil it?**

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The soapstone is wonderful! I don't think I will ever put in any other type of counter for the rest of my life. Here are the reasons:

- Soapstone is non-porous which means it cannot stain and does not have to be sealed.
- It won't crack if an extremely hot pot is put on it as it dissipates heat extremely well. Remember the black soapstone countertops in your Chemistry lab?

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- It has a matte finish. It blends in with the rest of the kitchen instead of being the center of attention.

### **SCRATCHING**

Soapstone, although very dense, is also soft to the touch (ground soapstone is talcum powder). It is soft enough that it can be scratched with a fingernail. The great part is that if it scratches, you just go get a piece of fine sandpaper or steel wool and rub it out.

### **OILING**

JUST INSTALLED - NEVER OILED



Soapstone may be oiled with mineral oil to deepen the grays into black and bring out any color veins in the stone. The only time I oil it is two days before a party as I hate clearing off the counters.

Since soapstone is very dense it will not absorb the mineral oil, but over time and multiple applications it will form a bond with the surface.

THREE DAYS AFTER OILING



The recommended oiling schedule for soapstone is as follows:

- 3 times per week for the first month
- 2 times per week for the second month
- Once a week for the third month
- As needed after the third month to keep the color

Application of the mineral oil should be done with a soft rag or paper towel. Don't apply too much! You want just enough to change the color.

Let it sit overnight and then, with a clean cloth, wipe off any excess mineral oil until it is dry.

So you see, to keep the oiled look it is a one to two day process. I think it looks great both ways which is why I only oil for parties. The pictures below show the soapstone just after installation. It has never had oil on it. The second picture shows the same counter only three days after oiling. It should be noted that the occasional oiling of a few times a year maintains the counter at a tone about half way between the two extremes.

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**What are the costs of doing plaster vs drywall? Do you have any preference between the two?**

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Yes I do!!!

After this job, drywall is a sore subject with me. Not only can it get dinged but the worst part is that you can see every seam where the pieces meet. These sheets are only 4 x 8 which means a lot of seams and a lot of uneven walls. Also, I would say a good 30% of the screws popped out soon after due to hammering and also the expansion and contraction of the studs they were attached too. Here we are two years later and screws are still popping out! Also, it was a nightmare to get these walls ready to paint. In my opinion, plaster may cost more up front but I believe the net cost is probably lower because it is done once and that's it! I believe drywall cost me at least twice as much when you figure the lost time and extra labor required to prep it afterwards.

**What kind of soapstone did you use?**

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The soapstone used is called Ipanema. [See it oiled and natural here.](#)

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**I would like any input you would be willing to give me regarding saving money. I have a**

Here are a list of items that will save you money in the long run.

1) Start construction after the rainy season has ended.

When I started we were having an El Nino weather phenomenon here in California. It rained for many days straight. I figure my project was delayed about 10 weeks due to the rain. Remember, time is money. Due to the delays we lost some contractors we had scheduled and had to delay

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others.

2) Don't be the bottleneck.

Make sure that you are getting your finish materials as soon as possible. so there are no surprises. The worst part of a cost overrun is one that you caused.

3) Iron out as many details as possible before you start.

4) Get the best contractors even if they cost more.

I redid the stone on the living room fireplace 3 times and outdoor fireplace 5 times. The exterior stone on the house was 50% replaced by a different contractor. One bedroom in the house (first to be painted) took two months to prep and paint. That one 12x12 room cost about \$5,000 to paint!

5) Add a late penalty to your contract with the general contractor.

I did not have that luxury as there was way too much work out there. I would have not been able to get a GC with that requirement at that time. I purchased a townhouse to live in during the remodel with the plan on selling it after the house was done. The estimate on the house was 10 months but due to the weather and manpower shortages, it took 24 months. Because the housing market was starting to turn down and I missed out on the prime summer selling season, I headed into October with the townhouse for sale. It sat for 8 months until the next summer. My estimate is that the delay cost at least \$300K due to a combination of construction/material expenses, 2 mortgages, and losses due to the bad housing market; the prices dropped for every extra day we took.

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**How's the steam shower working? Are you glad you installed one? Can you use it with and without steam?**

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The steam shower is awesome! It's probably my favorite room in the house. It takes about 5 minutes for steam to start and another 5-10 before it's good and hot in there. I use it at least twice a week and yes you can use the shower without the steam unit on.

I have four lessons learned for anyone installing a steam shower:

- 1) Make sure you run some type of radiant or electric heating in the bench and walls where you will be sitting. Stone gets awfully cold in the winter so I spend 5 minutes warming the bench and walls up with hot water from the shower. Also, the steam shower will perform better if the walls are warm.
- 2) Do your best to position the shower so it is only on interior walls. If you must place the shower against an exterior wall as I did, try to put the bench on one of the interior walls, if there is one.
- 3) Your ceiling must have a slope. Most contractors do not know this unless they have installed a steam shower in the past. The slope is required to allow the water to run to a wall instead of dropping on your head.
- 4) Another thing contractors don't generally know is that fans are not allowed inside a steam shower like in a regular shower. The moisture is so great that a fan will rust out in no time.

[Click Here for more info and pricing on Steam Generators](#)

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**I plan on putting pyramid-style columns on the front porch but am unsure of the dimensions. I noticed that you have these type of columns on your rear porch and was wondering if you could tell me the dimensions?**

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This is a picture from my front porch which has the same columns as the rear. The columns are square and taper from the bottom to the top. Measured along one side of the column, the top is 10" and the bottom is 15". The columns are 8 feet tall.

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**I would like to know about the supports you had installed for your counter overhang.**

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As you can see in the picture we had a plywood top (3/4" or 5/4"?) initially put in, but due to the 20 lb/sq ft weight of soapstone we had to put in corbels or reinforce the top. We decided to reinforce the top with 2" wide, flat steel bars spaced 18" apart. I believe the steel bars were 3/8" or 1/2" thick. Sorry, but I don't remember. The counter has an overhang of 12". If we went further than a 12" overhang then we would have needed to stiffen it up even more, adding weight to the top. To keep the strength of the plywood sheet, a router was used to channel out the space for the steel so that the steel and plywood formed a smooth top. If I remember correctly, the steel was attached with [Gorilla Glue](#) and clamped. We did not sandwich the steel between plywood as that would have made the countertop too thick. The soapstone was then laid right on top which, in essence, sandwiched the steel bars. This provided 3 benefits:

- 1) we could use one piece of plywood instead of multiple pieces that would weaken the structure,
- 2) this combination structure did not increase the weight too much on the cabinets below, and
- 3) there is no view of any metal (see the cherry trim across the end to clean up the look).

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**I love your front door. Would you mind telling me the manufacturer of the front door and where I can purchase it?**

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This is actually a custom door of my own general design with final design by the woodworker, Joe Madden. It is solid mahogany, 2.25" thick, 42" wide, and weighs 150 lbs. As you can see on the web site, I made the stained glass about a year after the door was in. I had the door made with a removable frame that slides into place and is held in by 3 screws at the bottom. This way I can swap out the glass at any time. The manufacturer was Joe Madden of [Madden Millworks](#) in San Pedro, CA.





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**What an awesome website. We are in the process of remodeling and I was delighted to find your site. You did an outstanding job on your home and it is truly a work of art. What window company did you use? I need to make a decision on the windows above my kitchen sink. Window area is about 8'. I had planned to do double casements, but our contractor suggested casements on the sides and a fixed window in the center....any thoughts?**

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The windows I use are push-out windows from [Loewen](#), a Canadian company. I absolutely love these windows and everyone that sees them always asks who makes them. Nobody ever heard of Loewen but I have created many converts. When the double windows are pushed fully open, there is no middle support so it is a large 5-foot wide opening. When the windows are open there are locks at the top and bottom of the window where it attaches to the frame. When you push those buttons in, the whole window can slide over on its track. This allows you to clean the outside part of the window from inside without having to go outside with a ladder. The exterior is aluminum clad with a douglas fir interior. All windows are double paned and each light in the window looks like it is an individual, separate light but it is not. The window contains one piece of glass for each

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pane thereby increasing its efficiency. Also, the screen is inside the window on its own door which adds a nice elegant touch.



Now to your question about what you should do in front of your kitchen sink. That's a tough one but due to the 8 foot width, I would lean towards your contractor's idea of keeping the middle pane fixed. The fact is that you probably wouldn't be able to reach it that well anyway with the sink and faucet right in front of it. For my kitchen I ended up having to get rid of the screens because they would be in the way (over the counter) when open and I wouldn't be able to push the windows open unless I opened the screen first. You can see the window in my kitchen pictures.

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**Did you use Seagrass limestone in addition to your soapstone? If so, can you please comment on how practical it has been to live with in a working/real kitchen in terms of staining and marking?**

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I actually used it in my master bathroom (floor, countertop, shower bench) and laundry room (floor). Take a look at those pictures to see it. I haven't noticed any problems with staining but then again it's only getting water and soap on it. I would think that as long as you keep it sealed it should be fine. Even granite stains when it's not sealed but is probably more widely used than anything else. If you have seen my [kitchen pictures](#) then you will notice I used soapstone. One of the main reasons is that you don't need to seal it because it is non-porous.

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**Wow, what a beautiful home. My husband and I are building a home up in Eureka, Ca. and I'm wondering if you will share the paint brand and colors used on the exterior of your home? I love the red and green with the wood.**

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The shingles are a natural Western Red Cedar shake clear coated with Cabot stains natural (#9100).

The windows and doors are aluminum clad on the exterior. The color is Cranberry from [Loewen](#).

The front door and garage door are mahogany and have a diluted stain of Jel'd Stain Brown Mahogany to give it a tint. Originally, the doors were only clear coated but the sun bleached them and the light color didn't look good. After the stain, the doors were then clear coated with Varathane. I believe s Satin finish was used. The brown trim you see all around is redwood. It is stained with Cabot stains Bark color.

All of the stains on the exterior are brushed, not sprayed. This makes the wood look hand worked and gives a nicer end product in my opinion. One small section was sprayed before I stopped the painters and it just didn't look good. The color came out as a solid brown and you couldn't see the wood grain.

Take a look at all paint and stain colors in the [Materials Used](#) section.

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