

AfriSamLifeStyle

South African architectural style

The charm of Cape Dutch

The Cape Dutch architectural style was introduced to the 'fairest Cape of all' by the early Dutch settlers in the mid-1600s. However, the origins date back to medieval Holland and Germany, the France of the Huguenots and the Dutch-ruled islands of Indonesia.

The first of the Cape Dutch style houses were practical, single storey houses consisting of a few rooms in a straight row under rafters which supported a steeply pitched thatched roof. Quaint examples of this style can still be seen in the charming fishermen's cottages in the village of Arniston. The walls were mostly built from clay or thick rubble before they started using burnt bricks. The lime mortar mix was made of ground sea shells, the roof thatching came from wild reeds growing along local streams, and compacted soil was used for the floor surfaces. By the beginning of the 1700s the first small towns and wine farms had been established. As time went by the settlers needed to extend their houses to accommodate their growing families, and they began to express their own individual tastes and preferences, leading to the introduction of the characteristic front gables in various styles and decorations and often embellished with the year of building.

By the mid-1700s, the Cape Dutch style had developed to the point where the basic single row structure had grown two wings on either end, resembling the typical U-shape floorplan, with wooden shutters covering the windows for protection against the harsh winds. Further out in the farm areas, the Cape Dutch style was developing differently, with a kitchen area in one wing added on to the end of the basic single row structure and changing the house into a T-shape. The next stage was to build a mirror image of the wing at the top of the T, thereby changing the structure into the typical H-shape. This floorplan became the most popular design for farmhouses, and can still be seen on many of the famous wine estates in the Western Cape. Outstanding examples are Vergelegen in Somerset West, Libertas outside Stellenbosch, and Boschendal in Groot Drakenstein, near Franschoek.

The country estates later underwent further expansion. It became customary to build a house for the eldest son, called the 'Jonkershuis', as well as a wine cellar, stables and coach house, in addition to the traditional slave quarters of that time, all of which was protected by a surrounding perimeter wall for security purposes.

The townhouses lining the rough gravel streets were built close to each other and in every kitchen there were fires burning in open hearths for cooking and heating water. Unfortunately with these open fires there was a constant danger that sparks would be blown onto the thatched roof by the strong south-easterly winds and set the house on fire. Under gale conditions a fire could spread rapidly to neighbouring houses and destroy an entire row. As a result, by the end of the 1700s the thatched and gabled houses in Cape Town were beginning to give way to

a new architectural style that soon gained popularity. There was a preference for flat-roofed single or double storey houses, a fine example of which can still be seen in the Koopmans-De Wet House in Strand Street.

Cape Dutch houses were traditionally built with great attention to symmetrical detail, with the impressive single or multiple gables as main focal points. Seen from the front, the entrance door was usually positioned in the centre with two half-width windows on either side, flanked by either two or four full-width windows spaced evenly along either side of the front door. This central front door generally entered into the main front room or 'voorkamer', which in turn opened onto rooms on either side, thereby forming the one side of the 'H' shape. A door at the far end of the 'voorkamer' led to the back room or 'agterkamer', which was generally the kitchen and dining area. The prominent feature in every kitchen was a large open fireplace with a Dutch oven fitted with iron bars for holding cooking pots. The farmhouse floors were made of compacted soil, often topped off with a smooth layer of cow manure which had to be refinished from time to time, while the floors of townhouses mostly featured a sturdy finishing layer of compacted peach pips. With the introduction of flat roofs and double storey houses, ceilings were lined with reeds or thin saplings.

Today we can still see some outstanding examples of Cape Dutch style houses that were built in the early 1800s, such as La Provence in Franschoek, Old Nectar in Stellenbosch, and Nederburg in Paarl. The Cape Dutch style reigned supreme until the mid-1800s, when slowly but surely other architectural styles began to be introduced into the Western Cape.



DIY - BACK TO BASICS

Your guide to bricklaying

When doing any bricklaying job, remember that the mortar binding the bricks and blocks together gives strength and stability to the wall or structure you are building. The consistency of freshly mixed mortar must be soft and flexible so that it will spread easily and make good contact. An excessively strong mortar mix may become too strong in its hardened state, causing it to crack as it dries. This is wasteful and an unnecessary expense.

Let's take a closer look at the selection of materials, mix proportions and correct bricklaying method.

Selecting materials

The properties of mortar in both the fresh and hardened states depends to a large extent on the quality of materials used.

Cement

All AfriSam cement products comply with SANS 50197-1 and bear the SABS mark of approval. For detailed instructions on making high quality mortar mixes, refer to the AfriSam Cement product brochure for the particular AfriSam product being used.

What is mortar?

Mortar binds bricks and blocks together. Freshly mixed mortar must be soft and flexible.

Sand

Sand should be:

- clean and free of grass, leaves, roots or other foreign material
- not contain too much clay
- consist of hard particles ranging in size from dust up to about 2 mm.

Lime

Add building lime to the mix if the sand lacks fine materials or a variety of particle sizes. Add the same amount as the volume of cement.

Mix proportions




The mix should suit the job being done.

There are basically three classes of mortar:

Class I: Highly stressed masonry

(High strength structural units - multi-storey buildings and walls exposed to dampness)

Batching by wheelbarrow:




All Purpose Cement	Building sand	Approximate yield
		
2 Bags (1 = 50 kg)	4 Wheelbarrows	0,22 m ³








Class II - Mix A: Exterior/Exposed to dampness

Batching by wheelbarrow:

All Purpose Cement	Building sand	Approximate yield
		
2 Bags (1 = 50 kg)	4½ Wheelbarrows	0,24 m ³

Class II - Mix B: Interior/Dry

Batching by wheelbarrow:

All Purpose Cement	Building sand	Approximate yield
		
2 Bags (1 = 50 kg)	6 Wheelbarrows	0,3 m ³

Batching the materials

Large batches: use a 65 litre capacity builder's wheelbarrow.
Small batches: use 20 or 25 litre capacity steel drums or buckets.

Mixing

Mix by machine or by hand.
Mix by hand on a clean hard surface.
Mix small batches in a wheelbarrow.

Handling

Cover mortar with plastic sheeting or a wet sack before use.
Discard mortar that has become too stiff to be workable.

Retempering

Use the mortar mix within a maximum of two hours.

Preparation

Wet down clay bricks before you start.
Do not wet down cement bricks and blocks.
Lay the bricks on a strong concrete foundation.

Tools required

Wheelbarrow; bucket; spade; strong fishing line; pointed bricklaying trowel; wood or steel straight edge; spirit level; set of pointing tools.

Good luck with your DIY project.

If you require further advice and assistance, contact
AfriSam Customer Service on 0860 141 141





DIY



TURN A CORNER OF YOUR GARDEN INTO A PLAYGROUND FOR KIDS

What is more enjoyable for parents and grandparents than relaxing on the patio with the sound of children laughing, playing and having fun? Whether you've just moved into a new house or been there for a while, do yourself a favour and go on a personal mission of checking out the playground equipment market. After thoroughly scouring the market, the first prize would be a timber frame jungle gym complete with all the bells

and whistles, including slide, swings, barrel, fireman's pole, boat, tyre ladder, the works. Most suppliers will quote you a waiting period before delivery, so what have you got to lose? Why not have a go at it yourself? If you've got little ones around, you will no doubt find that you're watched by eagerly watchful eyes who will hardly be able to wait to try out their own private playground. Here are a few items for you to consider. Good luck!

