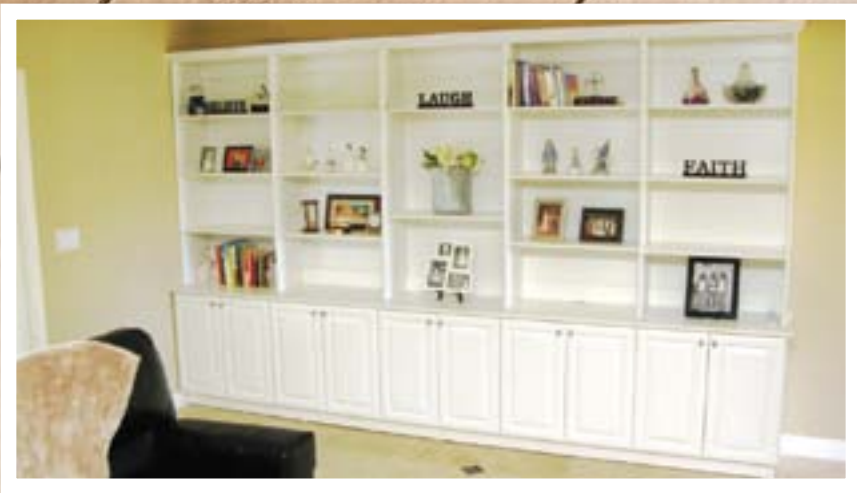


# HOME IMPROVEMENT



**FALL/WINTER 2015**

## Make your home's exterior pop

Color is a fundamental component of curb appeal and can make your home either stand out from the pack or blend in nicely with its environment. But you're not alone if you're unsure how to incorporate color to make your home look its best.

"Many homeowners are afraid to add color to their home exteriors because they don't want to make a mistake," says Kate Smith, president and chief color maven of Sensational Color. "No one should feel locked into blah or standard colors though."

For the apprehensive and bold alike, Smith offers insights into adding eye-pleasing color palettes to home exterior elements.

### The Roof

Color is critical to personality expression, so it makes sense for homeowners to select their roof color. Consider opting for colors that complement the

home's architectural style or give a nod to a particular era in design.

A blend of two to eight colors is a great way to shake things up. And certain roofing companies, such as DaVinci Roofscapes, offer a range to choose from. Their 50 standard colors include diverse hues like dark amber, smoky gray and light violet, and the brand even allows homeowners to customize. To sample potential custom blends, check out the DaVinci Color Designer Tool at [davinciroofscapes.com/color/designer](http://davinciroofscapes.com/color/designer).

### Front Entry

Are you an introvert with an orange front door? If so, you're sending mixed messages to friends and neighbors. The front door is the home feature offering the most flexibility in color choice, and a great place to let your personality shine.

Try installing smooth fiberglass paintable doors,

such as those from the Classic-Craft Canvas Collection from Therma-Tru, which makes it easy to update your home's exterior now and in the future. Their free DoorWays App allows you to try out different door and glass combinations on your home.

According to Smith, here's a look at what paint colors on entry doors of a home say about the occupants inside:

- Red: This bright color says I'm not afraid of standing out or saying what's on my mind.
- White: Says that I prefer things organized, neat and clean. Even if my home isn't always this way, I wish it were.
- Green: Tells the world you have traditional values and enjoy being a member of the community.
- Black: Says I'm consistent, conservative and reserved and my design style is timeless rather than trendy.
- Blue: Tells people you're



naturally at ease and people are attracted to your easygoing personality.

• Yellow: A personality similar to green but a bit less traditional, yellow says you're most likely a group leader.

• Purple: Reveals a free-spirit, comfortable taking

risks, thinking differently and dreaming big.

For more insights into stylish color use, you can download the free e-books, "FRESH Home Exterior Colors" and "FRESH Color Schemes for Your Home Exterior," authored by Smith and available at

[davinciroofscapes.com/color/choosing-color/](http://davinciroofscapes.com/color/choosing-color/). For details on paintable fiberglass entry doors, visit [www.therma-tru.com](http://www.therma-tru.com) and for information on the 50 colors of roofing available from DaVinci Roofscapes, visit [www.davinciroofscapes.com](http://www.davinciroofscapes.com).

## How to select the perfect ceiling fan

(NewsUSA) - More than a simple cooling device, many ceiling fans of today are high-tech works of art for your home. Ceiling fans can be a design element with sophisticated automated features. When selecting the perfect ceiling fan for your space and lifestyle, the American Lighting Association (ALA) suggests you consider several additional factors.

Think about how high or low tech you want to be. A very sophisticated system might seem intimidating to some, while others want much more than a simple on-off switch. Also ask yourself whether you want your fan to be an integral part of your interior design or simply an inconspicuous addition to your room.

• Home Automation for All-in-One Control

Efficient airflow and alluring designs continue to drive the industry, but more people are looking to home automation systems to easily control their

devices from a smartphone. One example is Fanimation's fan Sync, a Bluetooth-operated ceiling fan control.

According to Nathan Frampton, president of Fanimation, controls like fan Sync will become more commonplace in the coming years. Technology of this magnitude is only expected to grow as more homeowners sync their home's lights, central air thermostats and security systems to an all-in-one platform.

• Designs to Suit Today's Lifestyles

Just like the trends in home lighting design, ceiling fans have their front runners. Interior design styles are moving toward more organic aesthetics. This means designers are crafting rooms around exposed plumbing pipes, door and cabinet trimming and existing hardware, which helps mesh the entire room together organically.

To complete your design scheme, choose compatible trim and accent options for your ceiling fan. And be sure to consider the architecture of your home. Many newer homes have high ceilings with large great rooms, which give homeowners the chance to decorate their homes with larger or more ornate ceiling fans.

• Trends with Regional Appeal

Geographic location often affects ceiling fan trends and finish selection. Frampton says, "We see certain trends in different regions of the country, as well as around the world. For example, in the Southwest, bronze is a prominent choice, and internationally, nickel and white are more common."

For advice about which fan fixtures and styles are best suited for your home, talk with a professionally trained expert at an ALA-member showroom, or go online to

[americanlightingassoc.com](http://americanlightingassoc.com). With the right tools and

information, you can easily find the perfect ceiling fan

to make your home more functional and beautiful.

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# Prepare your pipes for a winter cold snap



(NewsUSA) - Winter has a certain amount of charm that comes with it – from sledding and outdoor ice skating to snowmen and brightly lit

trees. But when icy weather hits, and your pipes are ill-prepared, it can mean a long (and costly) spring. Here's what happens: When

temperatures drop, trapped water in pipes can freeze. Since water expands when it freezes, it can cause the pipes to rupture. When the pipes thaw, that's when homeowners might come home to a flooded house.

Instead of waiting before it's too late, now is the time to insulate your pipes before the cold weather returns. Do it in the comfort of

warm weather at your leisure so you're not rushed when the cold weather arrives.

### Insulate pipes

This action step performs double duty, keeping hot water pipes warm and protecting cold water pipes from freezing, which can lead to immediate energy returns. Homeowners with existing insulation should check it before the cold weather comes to town. If either the insulation or its tape looks cracked or crumbles to the touch, it should be replaced. If the pipes have either wire or tape heaters, homeowners should contact the pipe heater's manufacturer before attempting to insulate pipes.

### Old Man Winter

As a homeowner, you most likely will not be needing your hose or sprinklers this winter

season. To that end, drain and store your lawn and gardening supplies before the first freeze. Even well-insulated homes reach freezing temperatures if left unheated.

### Anti-leak technologies

Like any other industry, new technology is being developed to prevent water damage. One product, the FloLogic System, acts like a circuit breaker for the home plumbing system. The FloLogic system monitors a home's entire water flow from a single position on the water main. When the flow through the system's sensor exceeds a preset limit, the system shuts off the water and sounds an alarm at the keypad. If connected to a

security system, FloLogic will notify the monitoring service. Shutting off the water prevents flooding, saving you from potentially costly repairs. Many insurers will also offer discounts to homeowners who use the FloLogic System.

If, however, a pipe is already frozen, homeowners should turn off the water, slowly thaw the pipe, then call a plumber to make necessary repairs.

For more information about the FloLogic System, and protecting your home from water damage, visit [www.flologic.com](http://www.flologic.com) or call 1-877-FloLogic.

# Mission and Prairie Windows meet Arts & Crafts Style

Since a resurgence in the 1990s, the popularity of Arts and Crafts style homes has soared across America. Meeting the continued demand for products to fill these homes is Hy-Lite, a manufacturer of acrylic block and decorative glass windows.

"Our Craftsman style decorative glass window has always sold very well, so it was no surprise when members of our Hy-Lite Designer Advisory Council recommended we add more complementary design styles to our new Home Designer Collection," says Roger Murphy, president of Hy-Lite, a U.S. Block Windows Company. "The Arts and Crafts home style has several offshoots, including Bungalows, Mission, Craftsman and

Prairie designs. The new Mission and Prairie window styles harmonize with all of these home styles."

At David Weekley Homes, senior design consultant Monique Bolling agrees with Murphy's assessment of the marketplace. "I think the Prairie and Mission windows work well in homes with a Craftsman style touch to them," says Bolling. "I think people will love the linear play on these windows. I can see incorporating them into bathrooms, closets, and some dining spaces."

Gabby Barton with KB Home also anticipates strong success with the Mission and Prairie window styles. "The Craftsman, Arts and Crafts and Prairie styles all continue to be very popular architectural

styles," says Barton. "I don't see the trend going away anytime soon."

"Our architecture department designs our homes with windows that have a Craftsman look and feel. They also ensure the homes are designed with decorative exterior features like wood siding and window trim, such as shutters, to help enhance the Craftsman look. Exterior lighting, front entry doors and garage door styles are also selected to complement this look."

Barton relates that privacy windows with the Craftsman style are gaining in popularity. "These fixed windows are created with silk screened tempered privacy glass," says Barton. "That's a product our team is gravitating to in order

to fulfill both a design style and the challenges of space and privacy."

The Mission style window from Hy-Lite is a true Craftsman-inspired design constructed with silk screened tempered privacy glass and clear diamond shapes on the interior.

The Prairie style window features a simply elegant, transitional design with clean lines in the perimeter of the window.

According to residential designer Jason Reid, the window will be the ideal



solution to a privacy issue in his home. "We plan to have this new Mission window installed in the master bath," says Reid. "I can easily see how it will add both privacy and style to the room. Since I'm a designer I wanted something with a real

'wow factor' and I got it with this window. As a bonus, the Mission design of the window complements other design elements of our new home!"

For more information, visit [www.hy-lite.com](http://www.hy-lite.com).

# Easy to clean carpeting is key

(NewsUSA) - Many homeowners love carpeting. Its look and comfort, in addition to its insulating qualities, make it an essential home-decorating element. The fear, however, can be the stains left behind, such as the red wine that accidentally slipped from someone's hand one holiday party or a pet that didn't quite make it outside.

In the event mishaps like these occur, it pays to have carpeting that is made from material that you know is worry-free and easy-to-clean. Mohawk Flooring, for example, offers just such a product.

"SmartStrand Forever Clean is the toughest, easiest to

clean carpet on the planet," says David Duncan, Mohawk Flooring's senior vice president of marketing. "It really is the perfect carpet for families with kids and pets. Using the most advanced fiber innovation, it offers the highest level of beauty, comfort and performance available so you can live life worry-free."

Amazingly, SmartStrand is the first new fiber to be introduced in over 50 years, and is the only carpet that boasts durability and permanent, built-in stain resistance. As a result, it should be unsurprising that it is the highest-rated carpet for consumer satisfaction,

cleanability and durability.

The difference, according to Duncan, is that it's the first carpet to combine built-in stain protection with a nanotechnology spill shield.

"Made out of triexta, a greener, more eco-friendly fiber, it is the easiest to clean because it repels and prevents

spills from absorbing into the carpet," says Duncan. "Thus, it cannot become a stain."

Mohawk says it has tried to minimize its usage of natural resources, which in turn has enabled the company to reduce its energy consumption of its carpets while creating a fiber that is long-lasting, and

resistant to the toughest stains. Top that off with a carpet that can be easily cleaned with water and mild detergent – no harsh chemicals or cleaners needed – and you have a much more environmentally friendly flooring option.

For all the parents and pet lovers out there, know this:

It's just a matter of time before gravity forces an unwanted mess onto one of your floors. And when it happens, you'll surely rest easier knowing that it'll be easy to clean.

For more information, visit [mohawkflooring.com/foreverclean](http://mohawkflooring.com/foreverclean).



## Colorful home style matchups

Do you prefer earthy, muted colors? Then an Arts & Crafts style home may be in your future. But, if you gravitate more to brighter floral colors, then a Country/Cottage style home could be a good choice for you. Those are just some insights from national color expert Kate Smith with Sensational Color.

“Selecting a home style ties in mentally with the colors a person feels most comfortable around,” says Smith, chief color maven at Sensational Color. “For both the interior and exterior of a home, colors help energize us, relax us and set the tone for our lifestyles.

“For example, vibrant colors are typically used inside a Mediterranean style home, where you’ll find walls painted sun-drenched shades of gold, orange or terra cotta. Polyurethane trim pieces, like those from Fypon, can be painted or stained in an accent color to help set the home’s overall mood.”

To help guide homeowners with selecting the appropriate colors to accent home styles, Smith offers this selection of insights:

### Arts & Crafts Style Homes

• Exteriors: Muted earth tones, such as Cherokee Red or Monkey Madness from PPG Paints, can be used for the home exterior. Accent with beams and brackets stained or painted in soft tones of gray,

beige or green. Columns and porch accents may be in colors such as Earth Day or Precious Stone from California® Paint.

• Interiors: Light, harmonious colors inspired by nature can be used on walls. Examples include Ruskin Room Green, Roycroft Rose or Portrait Tone from Sherwin-Williams®. Polyurethane woodgrain mouldings, ceiling beams and millwork pieces stained in Natural Oak or Mahogany in the Same-Day® Stain collection, are the perfect accent to Arts & Crafts style home interiors.

### Mediterranean Style Homes

• Exteriors: Light colors that reflect intense sunlight with splashes of color as accents rule this architectural style. Warm whites, gray, sand or golden tones are best on this exterior when accented by a terra cotta colored roof with tile vents, columns and door and window surround trim in Toasted Marshmallow, Goldenrod Tea or Expedition Khaki from Behr®. Woodgrain shutters stained in deep browns, such as walnut, work best with a Mediterranean style home.

• Interiors: Echoing the sky and the sea, colors such as azure, green-blue and sky-blue complement walls in Mediterranean style homes. Woodgrain polyurethane beams on ceilings plus

impressive crown mouldings – both stained in English Walnut or Walnut Same-Day Stain – are ideal accents for interior rooms.

### Country/Cottage Style Homes

• Exteriors: Starting with a picket fence or porch railing, white (or off-white) plays a big role in the style of Country/Cottage style homes. From louvers to shutters to trim, crisp white details on smooth polyurethane millwork pieces stand out to darker colors

on the home or potentially a stone exterior. Some charming cottage exteriors can also be found painted seashell pink, sunrise gold or even periwinkle blue!

• Interiors: Well-crafted, practical moulding and trim details add a feeling of comfort to this informal style home. While wood floors add warmth and texture, crisp white accent baseboards, window sills and crown mouldings can be found to contrast walls painted any color from soft pastels to deep rich hues.

### Classic Style Homes

• Exteriors: For Georgian and Federal style homes with symmetrically-spaced windows, doors and porches,



muted neutral colors with dark accents, white trim and color on the front door are preferred. Neutral Hazelnut Cream or Moon Rise colors for the exterior and columns highlighted by a deeper Thorny Branch or Black Suede (all from Behr) on synthetic louvered shutters or the entry door would all be typical for the Classic style home.

• Interiors: Muted wall colors with baseboards, chair rails, crown mouldings and casings all painted white is most common for Classic style homes. The elegant and crisp white accents, whether as wall panels or interior door surrounds, highlights walls of Basketry, Silver Leaf or Chateau from Behr.

• Exteriors: A variety of textures and materials are incorporated on the exterior of Today’s Traditional style homes. The main body colors most commonly range from light to deep classic neutrals, such as grays, beiges and taupes. The “pop” of color – such as fire engine red, pumpkin orange or bluebonnet blue – usually comes on the front door and shutters. Smooth trim pieces, such as polyurethane rail systems, door crossheads and columns, are generally painted a crisp white.

• Interiors: These contemporary interiors can range from stark white walls to bold hues that create relaxing, sophisticated living spaces.

While millwork is generally smooth and white, it’s not boring. Unique elements can be seen in these homes, such as beams on a kitchen ceiling or a ceiling medallion highlighting a dining room lighting fixture.

Fypon, an industry leader in synthetic millwork products, has created a Style Guide to provide guidance on adding architecturally-accurate polyurethane pieces to the exterior and interior of homes in a variety of styles, even if the home was not originally created to reflect that style. A copy of the Style Guide can be ordered by calling 1-800-446-3040 or by downloading online at [www.fypon.com/literature/catalog.asp](http://www.fypon.com/literature/catalog.asp).

## New MicroDerm Bathing rejuvenates skin



Mansfield Plumbing has introduced a new generation of bathing experiences for tension-riddled people. The new MicroDerm Therapeutic Bath silently infuses bathwater with millions of microbubbles to help a bather relax, unwind and feel rejuvenated.

“The widespread appeal of the effervescent MicroDerm comes from both the relaxing warm water experience that helps soften the skin and the resulting clean, exfoliated skin,” says Haley Davis, product manager for Mansfield Plumbing. “This bathing encounter is completely unique. I was personally amazed when I tried it... the tiny oxygen-rich bubbles burst quietly on the skin to help clean and hydrate while exfoliating the skin’s outermost

The MicroDerm provides a stimulating bath that makes skin feel softer and more energized. Liquid film technology super-saturates the bath with up to 50 percent

more dissolved oxygen molecules than in regular bath water to gently stimulate and soften skin.

“Just trying this bathing experience once totally hooks a person,” says Davis. “It’s incredible how clean and soft this bath leaves the skin. Independent testing has been done and the results are impressive. One hundred percent of test participants with the MicroDerm demonstrated improved hydration and moisture content in the upper layer of the skin after a ten-minute immersion.”

In addition to relaxing, exfoliating and cleaning the skin, the MicroDerm also helps keep bath water warm longer. As microbubbles burst against submerged skin, heat is released to invigorate the skin surface and warms the water, increasing the temperature while eliminating the need to add hot water to the bath.

“Having the MicroDerm is equivalent to an in-home spa

treatment for your skin,” says Davis. “This is a product that will set builders apart in their marketplace and transform a bathing experience for homeowners.”

Available now from Mansfield Plumbing in the company’s Swirl-way® product line in 25 models with tub unit sizes of 60” x 32” to 72” x 42”, the MicroDerm comes in rectangular, oval and corner shapes. There are 25 different tubs, including both one- and two-person versions. Tub colors include white, bone, biscuit, almond, black, ice gray and British khaki. Trim finishes are available in white, bone, biscuit and polished chrome.

Founded in 1929, Mansfield Plumbing, which is owned by Corona, is a leading producer of top-quality, high-design, performance plumbing fixtures and fittings for use in residential, commercial and institutional markets. For more information, visit [www.mansfieldplumbing.com](http://www.mansfieldplumbing.com).

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# Home improvements with the highest investment return

**By Steve Morris**

**1. Replace Your Front Door**

This might seem like a fairly minor home improvement, but, replacing your front door has been shown time and time again to bring an amazing return. A new steel door averaged a 98% return. When looking at cost versus value, a new door is the top of the list.

Why?

Put yourself in the shoes of a potential buyer. You pull up to a house you are interested in. You see the landscape, the trees, the shrubs. All fixable. Then you walk up to the house. The front door is old looking, worn, splintered wood. You're about to literally walk through the door to your future... do you want it to look old and decrepit?

Now, picture a new, steel door. Nice paint. Strong. Looks safe. Much better. This puts the

buyer in a positive state of mind before they even step foot in your home.

A replacement steel door averaged a 98% return on investment - by far the highest return in our historical look at the "Cost vs. Value Report."

**2. Kitchen Remodeling**

This project is almost always at the top of the list. Kitchens are often the focal point of a home. Buyers look there first, and often put a lot of emphasis on how the kitchen looks, functions and feels.

Old, outdated appliances and ugly color on the walls turns buyers off. New floors, upgraded counter tops (tile and stone tend to bring the biggest return), along with fresh paint and new plumbing and lighting fixtures can all bring a serious return on your investment and also increases your home's value.

**3. Basement Waterproofing and Finishing**

Your basement represents a whole floor of your home. If you have a rancher, you have the potential to turn it into a two-story home.

But, the area has to be dry and free of mold and water damages if you are going to use it as a living area. This is why basement waterproofing brings such a great return. It gets rid of mold, foundation and wall problems and keeps the area dry. If you are going to store things in your basement or put in furniture, flooring and add rooms, you need the area to be completely dry.

Remodeling your basement is where the biggest bang for your buck comes in, especially if you have a small home.

Have a two bedroom, one bathroom home? You can



Remodeling your basement is where the biggest bang for your buck comes in, especially if you have a small home.

add an extra bathroom (huge increase in home value), bedrooms, an extra living room, home gym or office, and just about any other room

you desire.

By adding livable space, you increase value. In some cases, it can boost your asking price by 25% or more.

*Article Source:*  
[http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Steve\\_Morris](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Steve_Morris)

## It's hard to bungle colors on Bungalow Homes



Bungalow home, the George L. Burlingame House.

Relaxed and refined, Bungalow-style homes offer a variety of opportunities to welcome color in many ways. According to Kate Smith, chief color maven with Sensational Color, simplicity is the hallmark of Bungalows, but that doesn't mean the colors have to be simple.

"Bright colors with contrasting white trim can really add personality to a Bungalow-style home," says Smith. "I've seen fresh color schemes of nocturnal sea complemented by white trim and rich woodgrain doors on these home styles that I love. Because a Bungalow is often a one-story or two-story home with dormer windows, there's lots of ways to play with color."

Smith always recommends working from the "top down" when adding color to a home. And for Bungalows that usually means starting with a shake roof.

"Similar to an Arts and Crafts style home, a Bungalow really looks great with the texture and color of a shake roof," says Smith. "The color palettes I've seen on polymer shakes from DaVinci Roofscapes mimic nature but offer long-term resistance to fading from the sun. This means the color you select is the one you'll enjoy for many years."

"One of my favorite blends of roofing colors for a Bungalow home is the DaVinci Autumn blend which has a combination of five shades of cedar colors. Very natural looking to set the home apart in a neighborhood."

Once the roof color is selected, Smith recommends choosing the main color of

the home followed by the trim colors. "For a Bungalow you can easily use a neutral color and deeper tone for the trim," says Smith. "One of the combinations I prefer is chamois on the siding with deep forest night and British brown colors for the trim and millwork. Then a woodgrain door in dark cedar can really provide an accent that unites the entire exterior."

Smith has authored a free e-book, FRESH Color Schemes for Your Home Exterior, (<http://www.davinciroofscapes.com/color/choosing-color/>) that encourages homeowners to adopt a "top down" color approach to create an attractive and unified home exterior. In the book she offers different color combinations for Colonial, Ranch, Bungalow, Victorian, Spanish Mission, European and New American styles of homes.

## Set water heater temperature safely

The PUD reminds you to set your home water heater no higher than 120 degrees. This temperature setting reduces the risk of accidental scalding, especially to children and the elderly. It also saves energy and helps reduce your utility bill.

To set the temperature, turn

the water heater off at the circuit breaker panel or fuse box, remove the face plates on the tank that cover each element, and use a screwdriver to turn the temperature control dial to "120." If you feel you can't handle this task safely, contact an electrician.

Sometimes 120 degrees isn't hot enough to activate detergents or dissolve greasy food in automatic dishwashers. Manufacturers recommend using a liquid dishwashing detergent. Many newer models also have a water heating option that

boosts the temperature in the appliance.

For other energy-saving tips, visit the PUD website at [www.snopud.com](http://www.snopud.com) or call the Energy Hotline at 425-783-1700.

### TIP: Removing Carpet Stains

My son spilled a pitcher of red Kool-Aid® on our carpet. A professional carpet cleaner told me to spray any kind of carpet cleaner on the spot, blot it with a white clean towel, lay a white clean towel over the stain, turn an iron on low, and iron over the towel. I was told to keep the iron moving, so it doesn't burn the carpet. The heat drew out the dye. This works even if it is an old stain.

- Melissa

# Looking for some expert advice on wood flooring?

By Matt Torr  
www.fabulous-flooring.co.uk

After years in the wood flooring business we know all the ins and outs so we thought we'd share them with you! If you are thinking about buying or fitting a wooden floor then look no further.....read our article first and you'll get a leg up...a jargon free...fact rich gem of an article which will ensure you set off in the right direction. Trust us....we've done it.... a hundred times or more!

We've been in the wood flooring business for years, selling and fitting....so there really aren't many problems which we haven't come across before. We supply and fit solid wood flooring, engineered wood flooring and laminate flooring....and from time to time correct, repair or relay the floors which other people have installed...and we've seen some shockers! Sometimes a poor finish is just the result of someone doing a bad job...which we really can't do anything about but the single, most important thing is to buy wood flooring which is appropriate to your environment.

So let's start with some questions you might want to think about

What sort of environment do you have? Do you have high fluctuations in humidity?

How do you feel about scratches?

Do you want it to look perfect all the time or are you happy with a more 'lived in' feel?

Do you have pets or kids

(personally I see them as pretty much the same with regard to flooring wear...and eating habits!)?

Do you have an underfloor heating system?

Let's take a look at solid wood flooring:

Doesn't really need an explanation...it's a solid lump of wood...from a tree! Solid wood flooring looks and feels great but it's not for everyone.

It's a natural product and has a few characteristics which need pointing out. All timber once felled will continue to react to its environment with respect to moisture levels. Higher humidity = expansion, lower humidity = contraction, so if you have an environment in which the humidity fluctuates significantly you should think seriously before installing solid wood flooring. Older properties with less effective damp proofing, kitchens and bathrooms can all potentially cause problems as can newly built houses with residual moisture in concrete floors. If you are in any doubt we would recommend getting a local flooring specialist to do a quick moisture test. Underfloor heating can also pose significant problems to solid wood flooring and as a general rule of thumb, we would discourage our customers from installing solid wood over underfloor heating.

So...let's get on to wear and tear. Solid wood will mark. Period. If you're going to get stressed about dings and scratches forget it. Unless you want to put socks on your dogs and make your house guests



Hickory engineered wood flooring.

wear slippers! It's a natural product and will produce a 'patina' over time. Personally I love rustic grade solid wood... as it starts out a little less than perfect and has a great, warm, lived in feel to it and you won't get stressed when the dog skids in chasing the cat or your child drops a metal toy...life's too short to get stressed!

What about Parquet Flooring?

Parquet...or block flooring is generally installed by sticking oak blocks in a regular pattern...typically herringbone to a solid floor. The installation of block flooring should only be

attempted by full competent individuals who have access to specialist's tools. We do not recommend the DIY approach!

Let's take a look at engineered wood flooring:

Engineered wood flooring is basically a layer of 'real wood' bonded to a softwood base. Why? It's all about dimensional stability...we're no longer dealing with a fully natural product here so the manufacturers build in greater stability. The bottom line is it will look and feel like solid wood but you can use it over underfloor heating and in areas that are not suitable for solid wood installations.

It comes in a traditional tongue and groove...(think nailed down floorboards) and floating or click systems... akin to laminate flooring. So it really is incredibly versatile - it uses far less of the raw natural resource - which is a good thing and it can be as easy to lay as a click system laminate. We recommend the use of engineered flooring to all of our customers.

So it's perfect, right? Well don't forget the top layer is still real wood so you will need to bear in mind the wear and tear points raised in the solid wood section.

Let's take a look at laminate

flooring:

Laminates are made by bonding an image...basically a photograph onto a softwood base. An ultra-hard wearing surface is then applied. They come in endless styles and colors and can be fitted by anyone with reasonable skill level. Some laminates come with a 50 year domestic use guarantee...which gives you some idea how hard-wearing they are. So if you've got a busy house or you want some of the slightly more 'out there' designs they really are a great choice!

Article source: ArticleCity.com

## Improvement tips for your home bathroom



A bathroom can (and should!) be much more than a utilitarian space in the home. In the best circumstances, it will be a place to gather your wits for the day ahead and a refuse where you can unwind before bed.

But building a better bathroom is necessary before

you can truly relax in this space. To create the perfect at-home oasis, consider these ideas.

1. Coordinate Your Bathroom  
If you have ever replaced an appliance or fixture in your bathroom by necessity, you may have unintentionally created an uncoordinated

look. If you're tired of being mismatched, particularly in a space where you seek serenity, consider upgrading all your fixtures at once within one suite collection. Such coordination can provide a striking combination of style and performance.

Suite collections are easy

air massage tubs; and are also customizable for variables like size and optional fixtures. What's more, this route makes good financial sense, as a suite collection offers less hassle and better value over a la carte purchases.

2. Windows With No Views  
What's the point of beautiful

expansive windows when you only plan to cover them up with boring blinds or shades? To solve the age-old bathroom conundrum of needing natural light but wanting solitude and privacy, think differently about your windows. Decorative privacy windows make for an ideal solution, with adornments and finishes that keep away prying eyes.

To match a privacy window to your interior design needs, consider those options from a brand like Hy-Lite, which offers vinyl-framed windows with silk-screened design styles inspired by a range of architectural schools of thought. Their Home Designer Collection offers diverse styles, including the Metro window, inspired by modern architecture, and the Prairie window with a transitional design versatile enough to accommodate many aesthetics.

3. Icing on the Cake  
Decorative millwork can offer your bathroom elegance and luxury. Remember, bathrooms are humid, so

look for moisture-resistant polyurethane moulding and accent pieces, such as those from Fypon. These quick do-it-yourself ideas can be completed in an hour or two when using pieces that are pre-primed and ready for installation.

- Install a set of pilasters on both sides of your shower stall and a door crosshead overhead.

- Surround mirrors with lightweight polyurethane mouldings. Paint, faux finish or stain the mouldings to complement the bathroom.

- Install a small wall niche in a focal point of the room to display a flower arrangement or artwork.

- Add distinction to the room with crown mouldings.
- Give cabinets and shelving dimension and visual appeal with brackets or corbels.

There's no place like home. And within your home, there's no place like the bathroom. Give this important room your full attention when making home upgrades.



# Tips for solving common kitchen design dilemmas

(BPT) - Kitchen design is an art form, one where function and beauty harmoniously co-exist. Achieving that balance, however, isn't always easy. When renovating a kitchen, homeowners can find themselves facing challenging design dilemmas. And they are not alone.

"When redesigning or refreshing a kitchen, the goal is to create a space that is hardworking, yet beautiful," says Nate Berkus, renowned designer and artistic advisor to LG Studio. "Look for items that really represent who you are and your design personality, and you'll create an area you and your family will love both now and 10 years from now."

Berkus points to six common kitchen design dilemmas and offers suggestions on how homeowners can create a space that is functional, and also beautiful.

## 1. Space challenges

When you don't have enough room for the large table your family needs, get creative. Consider building an L-shaped bench around a farm table and adding extra chairs. It's a clever use of space and will create a cozy nook where your family can gather for meals, or kids can do homework. Plus, the bench

can double as storage space so it's extra hardworking.

2. Last year's - or last decade's - cabinets

Cabinets are one of the first things you notice in any kitchen, and they're also one of the most important in terms of functionality. If your cabinets provide ample space but look dated, Berkus suggests giving them a facelift. "I always appreciate a simple, clean style, but with cabinets I tell my clients they shouldn't be afraid to mix it up," he says.

Use varying materials and finishes, like a wood or paint color that's different from the rest of the kitchen. "I recommend sticking with a neutral palette for cabinets, whether you're installing brand new ones or painting your existing cabinets," Berkus says. "White, charcoal and gray will always be elegant, and you can't go wrong with black - it's absolutely one of my favorites. It makes a dramatic statement and looks fantastic paired with stainless steel appliances."

## 3. Small budgets, big taste

When you long for that sleek, built-in look but don't want to break the bank, counter-depth appliances are a great design choice. They seamlessly integrate with

cabinetry no matter what the material, supporting that clean look you ultimately want your kitchen to reflect.

"I'm obsessed with LG Studio's three-door counter-depth refrigerator," Berkus says. "The door-in-door feature is one of my favorites." The refrigerator also features a sophisticated, pro-style, flat-door design inspired by Berkus that gives it a premium look. LG Studio's slide-in ranges, with designs also inspired by Berkus, are another great option to help homeowners achieve a custom, built-in aesthetic.

4. Unattractive, inefficient lighting  
Lighting is one of the most important design elements in any room, and it's the one thing people often overlook when re-designing their kitchens. "Lighting can instantly change the whole feel of a space," Berkus says. "I believe it is one of the most important decisions you can make in any room, especially the kitchen, which, let's be honest, is usually the hardest working room in your home."

To create lighting that is both useful and beautiful, remember to light the room in layers - from above, under cabinets to illuminate work areas and all-around accent lighting to create ambiance. It's



also such an easy way to add a whole lot of personality to your kitchen. Opt for vintage sconces and brass or metallic lighting fixtures. They will instantly up the design ante and make the space feel decidedly layered and interesting.

5. Counter space confusion  
Figuring out how much counter space you'll need is always tricky. Start by considering all the ways you'll be using your counters. You'll need food prep areas, of course, but will you also want a breakfast bar where your family can sit for meals

and snacks? Will you need extra room for countertop appliances?

"My rule of thumb is, to always double the amount of counter space you think you'll need," Berkus says. "You can never have too much, especially if you like to cook and entertain."

## 6. The slate is simply too clean

A large, open-concept kitchen can seem appealing, but it can also be daunting to design and decorate.

"Don't be afraid to do something unexpected in the kitchen to break up the space,"

Berkus says. "I love the idea of creating an unexpected seating area in your kitchen. Shop your weekend flea markets or online stores for a vintage sofa, coffee table and rug to set up an area for your family to relax in."

Ultimately, Berkus says, keep in mind that the kitchen truly is the heart of the home. "Kitchen design is about creating a space in your home that brings the whole family together, and is the best place to reflect your sense of personal style."

# Attic Remodeling: What you can do with the empty space



When you have finished planning your home renovations, it is not uncommon for people to

forget their attics. For some people, the attic is merely a storage room for things that are no longer useful inside the

house. Others might deem this room as simply a hollow space above the house with little to no purpose.

If we take a look at it, the attic can be a potential room just like any other, aside from being simply a hollow space or storage room. In fact, it can also become a functional part of the house if renovated properly and designed more creatively. This is especially advantageous to houses with minimal spaces and those who longed to have an extra room inside their house.

So what remodeling ideas can you still fix up with your attic? Here are some tips:

- Office area - if you work at home and do not have an extra room in your house for an office, convert your attic into your own office space. Its location is perfect for some peace and quiet while you work.
- Home Theater - transform your attic into a complete home theater. Instead of crowding your flat screen TV into your living room, give it its own room in your attic, complete with other entertainment devices and several comfy chairs. Your movie marathons can now really feel like you are out watching movies in the theater.
- Your personal space - yes,

your bedroom is your own personal space but have an extra room to exhibit your artworks or your hobbies. You can even put all your old collectibles on display or even your CD collection. Decorate the room with your favorite paint color, carpet and a soft chair for you and some extra for guests. You can even entertain your visitors in this room.

• Library or reading area - if you have lots of books but have nowhere to display them, create your own library. This is an ideal place to read given the serene atmosphere.

• A game area - usually a basement is converted to a

game area complete with a pool table, video games and even a dart board. But if you don't have a basement, why not make use of your attic? Create your own game room and have friends come over for some leisurely games of pool.

• Extra Bedroom - if all bedrooms are occupied and you have some guests staying for the night, an extra bedroom in the attic would come in handy. Decorate it just like a regular guest room. Your visitors will feel more relaxed and comforted with the cool breeze and the quiet night in your attic.

# Clean up is a breeze with Toro's electric blower vac

Take the work out of fall clean-up tasks with the Toro UltraPlus Blower Vac. From the most powerful electric blower vac brand on the market, Toro's highest-performing UltraPlus (model 51621) provides powerful and precise handling to quickly clear leaves and debris from your yard and landscaping with little effort.

The UltraPlus conveniently combines a high-performance blower, vacuum and leaf shredder into one machine.

Its smart, ergonomic design saves you time and wrist fatigue by enabling you to add attachments to simplify tasks. For example, in blower mode, you can clear a wider path easily with an innovative oscillating nozzle, which uses differential air pressure to swiftly sweep the air back and forth.

Whether you're taking on stubborn leaves or cleaning out edging and cracks, the UltraPlus offers multiple tubes to properly match air

volumeto your task. The main tube makes quick work of leaves piled near the house or trapped in landscaping.

The power insert helps move debris into the wind and focuses the air stream to help create piles. The concentrator tube drives the air to help free stubborn leaves and clean out edging or cracks. Variable speed control allows you to dial the air speed anywhere from 100 mph to a maximum air speed of 250 mph, perfect for handling debris on different

surface types.

When it's time to vacuum, the quick-release latch easily switches the blower into vacuum mode without the need for tools. The patented Shredz-All™ Shred Ring works with the metal impeller to pulverize leaves and other yard waste into fine mulch, reducing up to 97% of debris down to less than 1/2 inch. That means you'll spend less time emptying the new easy-to-open, bottom zipper bag.





## Empty nesters, boost home value and your spirits

(BPT) - Whether they're heading off to college or they've finally finished their education and are starting their careers in a distant city, the departure of kids from your nest makes for a bittersweet time. If you've committed much of your energy-and most of your home-to raising kids for a couple of decades, you may be at loose ends when they move out. Home improvement is just the ticket to make yourself feel better!

Updating your home after the kids move out is good for you on multiple levels. In addition to the emotional boost, improvements can enhance your home's resale value if you're planning to down-size down the road. Or, you can focus on home improvements that will facilitate aging in place, like improving the lighting and usability of key rooms, such as bathrooms and the kitchen.

Here are a handful of renovation ideas for baby boomers looking to reclaim their home spaces after the kids have left the nest:

### Emphasize natural lighting and ventilation

Vision changes as you age, so the artificial lighting that worked for you when you were in your 30s or 40s may not be adequate when you enter your 50s and 60s. Lighting is an important upgrade if you plan to remain in your home into your Golden Years. Look for improvements that will

help aging eyes see better, like increased natural lighting and task lighting in work areas.

Modern, energy efficient fresh air skylights are a cost-effective and beautiful way to improve a home's natural lighting and passive ventilation. Especially effective for ventilation in kitchens and for ventilation and privacy in bathrooms, skylights like those made by Velux America can work in virtually any room - even those with no direct roof access. Have a ground-floor laundry room, closet, hallway or other area that could use more light? Sun Tunnel Tubular skylights can deliver natural light from the roof into all areas of the home and electric light kits are available for 24/7 functionality.

Energy Star-qualified, solar-powered fresh-air skylights can also improve a home's energy efficiency and improve indoor air quality through passive ventilation. Solar-powered blinds, available in designer colors and patterns, further boost the efficiency and beauty of skylights. Plus, the skylight, blinds and installation costs are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit for energy-efficient home improvements. Visit [www.whyskylights.com](http://www.whyskylights.com) to learn more.

### Create a "me space"

You already have a guest bedroom, so there's no need to leave Junior's old room set up as a bedroom. Turn it into



Balanced natural light and passive ventilation come with decorating flair when skylights are added to a room. Operated by touchpad remote control, Energy Star-qualified solar powered fresh air skylights and blinds, along with installation costs, are eligible for a 30 percent federal tax credit. Get details at [www.whyskylights.com](http://www.whyskylights.com).

a space that works for you, like a home office, exercise room, music studio, craft room, workshop or home theater.

As you're planning the improvement, keep in mind your long-term plans. If you'll be selling the home at some point, consider a room that will have broader appeal, like a home office. If you plan to age in place, remember to incorporate features that will facilitate your use of the room even if you experience mobility issues down the road.

For example, you may want to take the opportunity to widen doorways, replace doorknobs with door handles, replace loose carpet or slippery tiles with slip-resistant flooring, and improve natural lighting and ventilation throughout the room.

### Renovate (or create) a master bathroom

Bathrooms sell homes, and if you've had to share your bathroom with the kids or live with an outdated master bathroom - or none at all -

now's the time to renovate your bathroom. In addition to all the luxurious features you've been dreaming of, like a rainfall shower head and heated floor, keep in mind the practical improvements that will make the room safe and usable as you grow older.

Look for slip-resistant flooring, improve natural and task lighting and replace faucet knobs with easy-to-manuever levers. Install grab bars around tubs and toilets, as well as in the shower. Bath

product designers are now making grab bars that offer the look of design elements coupled with the security of sturdy support.

The departure of your children creates an opportunity to accomplish some home improvements you've been dreaming of for a while. As you're reclaiming spaces once devoted to kids, look for improvements that can increase your home's value and help you stay in your house as long as you wish.

## Heat your home without wasting energy this season



(BPT) - If you're interested in living a greener lifestyle, perhaps you're already trying to reduce your energy usage as much as possible. Maybe you ride your bike to work, unplug your electronics when they're not in use, use fans during warm weather and avoid wasting water.

Saving energy can get more difficult, however, when the seasons change and colder weather sets in. Heat is a primary source of energy usage. In fact, research from Tulikivi, the world's largest manufacturer of heat-retaining fireplaces, shows that 52 percent of a home's annual energy consumption

is allocated to heat.

Now is the time to think about reducing your energy usage during the winter. Here are some ideas that will help you enjoy a warm, cozy home while saving both money and energy.

### Heat more efficiently

A crackling fire makes for more than just a pleasurable experience; it can also be an energy-efficient heating source. Fireplaces from Tulikivi help heat your home long after the fire goes out. Tulikivi fireplaces are built from soapstone, which has better thermal conductivity compared to other materials because of its dense structure

and mineral composition.

For home-owners, this means once you start a fire in your fireplace, the soapstone will store heat in its thermal mass, allowing a two-hour

burn to radiate heat for up to 24 hours. This lets you enjoy the clean, comfortable, cost-saving warmth without using additional energy.

You can learn more about Tulikivi, the recycled materials used in its manufacturing process, the clean combustion of its masonry heaters and its commitment to sustainability at [Tulikivi.us](http://Tulikivi.us).

### Close the drafts

One of the best ways to improve your energy efficiency is to reduce your energy waste. Window cracks and door drafts allow warm air to escape, which means you're leaking both energy and money.

Seal those areas by using caulk to shore up any drafty windows and put plastic wrap

over the window surface to keep out the chill. For the door jambs, you can purchase a door stopper to plug the gap or you can use a towel at the base to block the opening. Try to close off the bottom of any exterior door, particularly the doors you seldom use.

### Make sure your other heating options are running efficiently

When you're not using your fireplace, it's good to know your backup heating options are operating efficiently. Have your furnace inspected routinely and make sure you change the filter each month. You should also invest in a smart thermostat. This

technology allows you to set the temperature of your home for different times of the day so you can lower it when you're sleeping or away. The calendar option means you can program your home's temperatures ensuring you never waste energy.

Although it's still nice outside, colder temperatures are on their way. That doesn't mean you have to sacrifice your green lifestyle when your cheeks turn red. By using the tips above, you'll still enjoy the same warmth and comfort without the additional environmental impact. To learn more about Tulikivi, visit [Tulikivi.us](http://Tulikivi.us) or find them on Facebook and Twitter.

## What's cooking in kitchens

(NAPSI)-If you've been thinking—or just dreaming—of a remodeled or upgraded kitchen, a look at the latest trends may prove inspiring.

Industry experts say today's kitchens are influenced, on the one hand, by the very industrial appliances you see in restaurants and on the other, by the maker movement in genres such as foodie, reclaimed and do-it-yourself. Particularly popular are these four styles:

### Kitchen Design Trends

1. **The Classic Kitchen.** For this look, use bold colors and mix and match materials used for cabinets and countertops. Open shelving is still popular, but glass doors with and without pattern are trending as well.

When it comes to the kitchen sink, it's all about the basin. Modular or apron sinks, and single-basin sinks are where the flow is going. Sleek and professional-grade stainless steel appliances serve to balance the color scheme of this kitchen while furnishings provide pops of colors and feature larger-scale hardware. Fixtures feature warm finishes in tones of gold, brushed brass and copper.

It's a bright idea to light up this kitchen with distinctive, unusual lighting pieces over an island or dining table. Look for tiles that tell of texture, geometrics, neutral shades, artisan looks and craftsmanship to use against the wall.

2. **Farmhouse Kitchen.** For a homemade attitude with a farm-to-table feel, go for brightly colored or neutral painted cabinets.

Find lighting, furniture and accessories that have a handmade, antique feel. They don't actually have to be old. Distressing the new can be nice and it's easily done with certain stain techniques and a little roughing up of the wood.

Wrought iron and dark metals, natural stone and reclaimed materials add to the warm and inviting atmosphere.

3. **Black and White Kitchen.** Here, high contrast and bold graphic patterns in classic black and white create a backdrop for a few pops of color in accessories and kitchenware.

The restaurant influence is particularly prominent in this kitchen and so is Factory Chic, consisting of dark, rich painted wood, modular and apron sinks, with lots of built-in accessories and professional-grade appliances. Use task lighting to highlight focal points such as wall sconces.

4. **The Sophisticated Naturalist Kitchen.** For a bright clean look, this kitchen comes in several shades of gray or brown. Soft, natural-colored or palely painted wood adds a refined vintage look.

Organic textures in rugs and linens provide depth while accent colors are understated and nature inspired.

Sleek, professional-grade, stainless steel appliances balance out this look and blend beautifully with the gray color palette.

For reliable, heavy-duty, professional-grade, stainless steel appliances, many people turn to the Frigidaire Professional series. These offer a simple design and elevated cooking experience and fit in just about any new or current home. The collection is affordably priced and compatible with standard-sized spaces so each piece can easily fit into existing kitchens.

When shopping for appliances, it's also a smart idea to look for:

- Convenient storage options, so snacks and meal ingredients are easily accessible.
- Energy-efficient and multi-functional options that make food prep, storage and



cooking more convenient and provide small-space solutions.

- Seamless integration of technology paired with a universal design accessible for any age and ability, especially as aging-in-place and multigeneration homes are increasingly popular.

For further facts, tips and trends, go to [www.frigidaire.com](http://www.frigidaire.com).

## How to live large in a small space

(BPT) - Whether you're ready to join the tiny house movement or just want to get the most out of a compact space in your home, there are easy things you can do to make a small space look, feel and function like a larger one.

Consider using every conceivable space to please the eye—even the ceiling. Reflect the shape of your dining room table with a bold accent color on the ceiling above it. Another idea: define a space at the floor level with an area rug beneath a couch and side table.

Place an ottoman with a hidden storage compartment or flip-top serving tray beside a comfy chair. Move a twin bed next to the wall and add big patterned pillows to create seating space by day, and sleeping space by night. The pillows can also provide extra floor seating for entertaining.

Consider creating a sleeping loft. It's not only cozy, but leaves extra living space below. A Murphy bed that folds up discretely into the wall is another space saver.

Try painting a corner, such as a reading nook, in a bright, bold color for a mini-room effect. Or paint a piece of furniture or picture frame and elevate it to something special.



Take advantage of cabinetry with built-in storage features, from pullout racks that create added pantry space, to bathroom cabinets equipped with laundry hampers, hairdryer hooks and bins for grooming items.

With these tips, you'll find that good things really do come in small packages. For more tips, visit [sherwin-williams.com](http://sherwin-williams.com).