

Home Improvement

The design craze that's here to stay

(NewsUSA) - Shiplap, the wall treatment favored by popular home improvement shows, is filling Pinterest boards and continues to top the to-do lists of today's savvy DIYers. Even high-end homebuilders are incorporating it into their upmarket

designs. And when crafting a custom shiplap wall, the pros are choosing cypress because of its practicality and stunning good looks.

Shiplap Defined

Shiplap has long been a popular siding pattern for the exterior of homes. Nowadays,

design pros are bringing it indoors as paneling to create a rustic, farmhouse vibe, or to highlight contemporary flair.

"Typically, what homeowners refer to as shiplap is simply run-of-the-mill boards nailed on a wall, with a small gap separating them,"

says Zack Rickman of the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association, www.CypressInfo.org.

"Actually, shiplap is a board pattern with L-shaped notches on the top and bottom edges. When installed, the boards overlap with a gap, presenting a more authentic, high-end look. And while the size of the gap is adjustable – depending on homeowner preference – nickel gap is arguably the most popular size with a six- or eight-inch shiplap board."

Stylish Solutions

When designing a room, homebuilder John Moleski, JM Designer Properties of Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, says homeowners are drawn to shiplap because of its clean, crisp, modern lines, and the versatility it offers.

"Creative use of shiplap can enhance an entire room,"

Moleski says.

"Make an accent wall to contrast with surrounding walls. Install it horizontally, and the long lines of the boards will visually stretch a room. Or go vertical with it to add perceived height to the ceiling."

While home improvement stores are stocked with a wide variety of wood paneling products, Moleski prefers working with cypress.

"Solid cypress and shiplap make a perfect match," he explains. "Not only is the wood local to my area and affordable, the wood's intriguing grain pattern makes it remarkably beautiful."

For budget-conscious homeowners, Moleski offers this cost-saving tip: "As an alternative to using select grade cypress, consider rough-sawn no.2 grade and install it with the smooth side facing out," he says. "It'll

achieve a similar look with some added character at a lower cost."

Finishing Flexibility

Fred Lewers, Palm West Home Builders in Palm Coast, Florida, says options abound when it comes to selecting a finish for a cypress shiplap wall.

"Cypress can be finished in a variety of ways," Lewers says. "Stain it to highlight its natural grain and texture, or paint it to add a pop of color. You also can use a whitewashing technique for a truly unique appearance. My preference is to leave it natural, and let the wood's beauty shine."

Regardless of your desired look, Rickman offers one piece of important finishing advice. "Look for an oil-based stain, or paint and primer system," he says.

"Water-based products sit on the surface and are prone to cracking and peeling. Oil-based products soak into the wood, providing superior protection and performance, especially in wet zones like bathrooms."

Take it from the professionals: Shiplap is not just a design craze; it's here to stay.

For ideas on building a cypress shiplap wall, visit www.CypressInfo.org.



Innovative Fire Extinguisher

(NewsUSA) - Every household and business needs a fire safety plan, and a simple to-use fire protection device can be a key component of keeping your family and property safe.

However, all fire-suppression devices are not created equal, and portability, safety, and ease of use are key when

selecting the right fire protection product for your home, business or wherever.

BlazzOut Inc has developed a lightweight and user-friendly fire-extinguishing device that offers several advantages for home, business, and vehicle use as well as other settings where simple, environmentally-friendly

firefighting is needed, such as schools, libraries, and farms.

The signature BlazzOut product is a compact, lightweight, and easy-to-handle grenade-style extinguisher known as BlazzKiller. The device, designed to be

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thrown into a fire from a safe distance, contains a non-toxic water-based formula, which is economical and effective. The container is made of an easily breakable resin plastic that will release the fire-suppression liquid when thrown into a fire.

The BlazzKiller proprietary formula is engineered to smother flames quickly and also initiates an endothermic process of taking energy from the fire itself to cool the surrounding area. This chemical reaction also releases nitrogen and carbon dioxide into the immediate flame, which prevents oxygen from reaching and feeding



the fire in order to prevent the fire from restarting, thus providing peace of mind.

BlazzOut products were designed by a chemical engineer to provide safe, simple, fire protection that can be used by almost anyone, including older adults and children approximately 7 years of age and older. The BlazzKiller fire-extinguishing grenades can be safely stored anywhere and has no need for maintenance.

BlazzOut also offers the BlazzTrap, an automatic fire-extinguishing device that features the same BlazzKiller technology and is designed to

be placed where it will snuff out fires in up to 250 sq ft, such as in the kitchen, garage, attic or basement when the glass ampule reaches a predetermined temperature.

In addition, the BlazzTrap device can be placed in a boat, camper, car, truck, or RV as well.

Other benefits of BlazzOut products include easy clean-up and no property damage, compared with the damage often caused by conventional fire extinguishers, as well as a shelf life of approximately five years.

Visit www.tiny.cc/blazzout for more information.

Create a chef-inspired kitchen

(NAPSI)—Cooking like a professional doesn't have to mean a kitchen full of expensive gadgets, but you do want one where prepping, cooking and cleaning is seamless and comfortable. That requires considering design details that enhance the workflow. Consider these helpful hints:

Smart Storage

Use hooks, magnets and utensil holders to keep favorite knives, pot lids, spatulas and the like within easy reach. A lazy Susan can help spices stay properly sorted.

Bright Ideas For Lighting

Choose lighting that maximizes cooking efficiency and comfort. Task lighting should include overhead stove lights and under-cabinet fixtures so cooking and food prep areas are properly lit. For dining, overhead chandeliers may be best.

The Kitchen Sink

While shiny appliances, countertops and beautiful backsplashes may get all the attention, the sink and its surrounding area are the most used in the kitchen and deserve special consideration. Position the sink with as



much prep space around it as possible. For the sink itself, look for efficiency and functionality. For example, the new BLANCO IKON Apron sink is designed with a convenient low divide that makes it easier to handle large pots and baking sheets. Another advantage of its apron front design is that it's installed further forward with no countertop. What's more, it's made with nonporous, easy-to-clean Silgranit composite patented material and comes in eight trending colors.

Optional accessories help enhance the workflow and include a floating grid that provides an extra level within the sink, to further ease the

strain of handling heavy pots. A floating cutting board fits right on top of the sink to instantly create more workspace.

Faucets To Favor

Faucets designed with a higher arc and a pull-down spray head make rinsing dishes, filling pots and cleaning the sink faster and simpler. The new BLANCO RIVANA collection also has a coordinating soap dispenser available. The convenient Solenta Senso works hands-free. "Handy" when your hands are full—or very dirty.

For further facts and tips on kitchen design, visit blancoamerica.com.

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Take your basement from unlivable to lovable

(NAPSI)—Look up “basement” in the dictionary and you’ll see cellar, vault—even crypt. But with a little effort and some design flair you can make your basement come alive—and reclaim valuable living space.

Create the workout room you always wanted. A dramatic home theater. Or a spacious office, playroom or craft area. If you can reimagine your basement, you can remodel it. Here are hints on how:

1. Make a plan: An accurate floor plan will help you visualize the end result—especially if you’re dividing rooms, adding a pool table, a large sectional or a projector and theater seating.

Dozens of design apps can help you create a virtual, 3D floor plan. A few to

consider: Home Designer Suite, Sweet Home 3D, Home Design 3D and Google Sketchup.

Check to see if you’ll need a permit for improvements.

2. Banish water: If your lower level has moisture problems, your nose will know.

Besides a musty smell, moisture leaves other clues: dark, saturated concrete block walls, flaking paint or condensation. Consult a basement waterproofing contractor if you have any concerns before you begin remodeling.

3. Like the look of wood? Check out Armstrong Wood-Haven Ceiling Planks. They’re available in a variety of finishes, although Wood-Haven Classic White planks is the DIY favorite. These

wood-look ceiling planks can install over drywall, plaster or joists and can even cover an existing drop ceiling grid.

4. Beautify floors and walls: Beautiful, versatile flooring options are abundant today. Creating a playroom or cozy retreat? If moisture isn’t a worry, add warmth and softness underfoot with carpeting or an area rug.

If your sub-floor is smooth and even, vinyl is hard to beat. Whether in tile, sheet or plank form, the styles are versatile and the material is water-resistant or waterproof.

If you’re adding a basement gym, consider rubber interlocking tiles. They absorb shock and you can install them yourself.

You’ll discover abundant wall-covering options, too—

such as wainscoting, paneling and beadboard. Subtle grass cloth wallpapers add sophistication. Peel-and-stick cork wall tiles create design interest and absorb sound.

Whatever your choice, be sure to waterproof the walls before you cover them.

5. Make a statement: Display cubes or built-in shelving with lighting are great options for showing off your trophies, baskets, pottery or collectibles. For color and warmth, mix and match a variety of pillows and plush throws.

To personalize your walls—without making a permanent design commitment—consider wall decals. Their elegant patterns and bold images add instant interest. You can even make your mark with an inspiring,



Wood-look ceiling planks are a DIY favorite.

oversized quote.

Use every type of lighting—general, task and accent—to bring your basement out of the shadows. Mirrors are another great way to add light—and the illusion of space.

DIYers have never had more versatile design tools and materials to choose from. So don’t let your lower level go unloved and unused any longer. Let the transformation begin.

Three ways to get the house you want

(NAPSI)— In a perfect world, you’d fall in love with a new home, submit an offer, and have the seller accept it. The world, however, is rarely perfect. So how can you make your offer stand out when there’s competition for the home you want? Here are three hints that can help.

1. Shorten the timeline: Removing contingencies is a strategy to fast-track the closing timeline.

2. Make a cash offer: Nothing appeals to sellers like cash. When you offer cash instead of getting a mortgage,

you eliminate the time for the mortgage to close. Don’t have the cash? There are still options. Companies such as Flyhomes make the cash offer on your behalf, close with the seller, then sell the home to you at the same price after your mortgage is finalized. Plus they’ll help you deal with title and escrow.

3. Find out why the seller is selling: A seller who’s lived in a home for a long time is likely looking for a buyer who will cherish the home as much as they did. In that case, you might choose to

write a letter to the seller to accompany your offer. On the other hand, the home may be owned by an investor, who will be most interested in

selling to the buyer with the highest price and best terms.

For further facts and tips on buying a home, go to www.flyhomes.com.