

Home & garden



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Home & garden

Turning green in the fall

This fall Home & Garden issue puts the spotlight on being “green,” with the focus on a new 10-home development in Danville of zero energy houses, a first for Contra Costa County. Another story gives tips on extending the eco-friendliness of your home to the garage. This special section also presents the story behind one Danville couple’s beautiful award-winning bathroom remodel, and gives guidelines for fall yard cleanup as well as kitchen remodeling. And, after the water rationing this summer, aren’t we all hoping for greener lawns in the spring? Here is what to do now to make that happen.

CONTENTS

Oh, kitchen, my kitchen

Most popular room in the house can be stylish and functional5

Bathroom beauty

Remodel transforms basic bath to St. Regis luxury7



Green homes are dream come true

Zero energy houses are comfortable, healthy—and beautiful8

Improve your lackluster lawn

Fall is the time to prepare for a lush springtime lawn11

Rakes and pains

Tips to take the pain out of fall cleanup11

Going for the gold

Interior designers predict what will be hot this season13

Greening your garage

Being “eco-friendly” extends all the way to the garage13

Editor: Dolores Fox Ciardelli

Advertising Manager: Mary Hantos

Art Director: Rick Nobles

On the cover: The award-winning bathroom of Rebecca and Keith Wood features cherry wood vanities with emperador marble sinks, Italianate gold fabric window shades, and a stone double-headed shower; see page 7. Photo by Dolores Fox Ciardelli.

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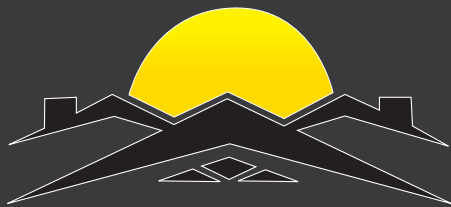
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Current trends create stylish, functional kitchens

Remodeling this popular room can bring big returns

Incorporating current trends into your kitchen design not only helps you create a stylish and updated room, but also increases functionality. From the latest colors to the newest materials, good design can ensure you enjoy your new kitchen.

A recent national survey of kitchen designers conducted by the National Kitchen & Bath Association and luxury appliance manufacturer Thermador identifies several trends influencing today's kitchen design—from popular colors and finishes, to new

“More people are combining their living and family rooms with the kitchen and remodeling their kitchens into family-friendly rooms perfect for entertaining.”

Style and color: More than half (56.8 percent) of the kitchen designers surveyed said “traditional” was their most often requested type of kitchen design. However, designers identified contemporary and clean, simple lines as kitchen design trends to watch for.

For cabinetry, the top two most used finishes in kitchens are cherry and maple, while paints and exotic woods tied for third. This is a departure from the once-dominant oak cabinetry. Moreover, designers identify stainless steel as the top color scheme in today's kitchen designs, followed by beige and bone colors.

Appliances: Stainless steel continues to lead the way as the most popular finish for appliances. However, appliances with custom paneling to match cabinetry are more commonly incorporated into today's kitchen designs. The appliances that most often receive paneling are dishwashers and refrigerators. Designers identified modular refrigeration,

along with induction cooktops and speed-cooking ovens as one of the most exciting kitchen technologies.

When it comes to splurging on top-of-the-line appliances, consumers and designers agree they can be a great investment. Designers even say “dream” appliances rule over custom cabinets and special countertops.

Countertops and backsplashes: The countertop material used most frequently is granite, and with unlimited stone colors and designs, it's highly customizable. However, another stone material—quartzite, noted for its durability—comes in a strong second. Additionally, the top three backsplash materials are tile, followed by granite and glass.

Upcoming trends: When designers were asked to name new trends to take note of, many identified new color applications. Specifically, greater use of color in cabinets was cited as an up and coming trend, as was the use of two-colored cabinetry and molding, and the overall bolder use of color.

—Emily West, ARAcotent



ARA

Trends identified in a national designer survey included modular refrigeration, quartz countertops, stainless steel, exotic woods, bolder use of color and contemporary lines.

materials, and even new technologies being incorporated by designers.

Andrea Burton, owner of Danville-based Kitchen Solvers of the Valley, said that even during tough economic times, updating this room is a good idea.

“The average return on a kitchen remodel is 85 to 112 percent,” she said. “And all signs point to waiting it out in your home for a few more years.”

Functionality and layout: Today's households often function with more than one cook, so kitchen designs frequently incorporate multiple cooking stations such as a range and a wall oven, or a range and a cooktop. Appliances are also occupying islands to add cooking space. Additionally, prep sinks are showing up on islands or other locations in the kitchen for increased functionality.

Reports show that the average family of five spends 175 hours in the kitchen each month. Burton says families in the Tri-Valley are opting to open the space into a “great room” feel.

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DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

The award-winning master bath of Rebecca and Keith Wood of Danville features a corner jet air soaking tub, Italianate gold fabric window shades and travertine marble flooring. Their challenge was to create this lush and lovely master bath from the room shown below, which had wooden vanities and sinks of pink cultured onyx, a prefabricated plastic inset shower and glass block windows.



COURTESY REBECCA AND KEITH WOOD

Bathroom beauty

Remodel transforms basic bath to St. Regis luxury

By DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

When Rebecca and Keith Wood enter their master bath, it's a step into a Tuscan villa. The rich, warm travertine marble flooring blends with the Italianate gold fabric window shades while both the angled tub and the open double-headed stone shower offer sumptuous bathing possibilities.

But the bath didn't come this way. "The sinks were pink cultured onyx. The shower was a prefabricated plastic insert," said Keith Wood, remembering its disconnect in a multi-million-dollar home. A glass block wall prevented natural light from entering, and its

vanities were long white wooden cabinets with a laminate top.

Despite the bathrooms and other oddities, the Woods saw the possibilities of the house, which is at the end of a cul de sac in the neighborhood west of Old Blackhawk Road in Danville. It was built in 1994 on a 1-acre lot and had been vacant for a year. They knew the uniformly pale walls could be repainted, crown molding could be added, and the window coverings could be improved.

"He built a great shell," Wood said of the original owner.

They moved into the home in 2002. Rebecca's brother, Cincinnati designer

Continued on **PAGE 15**



PHOTOS BY MEGHAN NEAL

The zero-energy homes in Hansen Lane Estates have stucco exteriors and clay roofs and are positioned for ultimate warming by the sun. The outside walls are insulated by 10 inches of Styrofoam, which keeps the home cool in the summer, reducing the need for air conditioning. The landscaping is all native plants that can be watered less than three days a week and eventually not at all.

Green homes are dream come true

Zero energy houses are comfortable, healthy—and beautiful

BY MEGHAN NEAL

For 50 years Norman Rhett's family has owned the property at 216 Hansen Lane in Danville, once a simple piece of land boasting little more than a house and a barn. About a decade ago, Rhett and his wife Kay began to dream about building a green community there.

"I'm concerned about climate change. I think it is potentially a severe risk, possibly to my generation but very likely my children's and, if any, their children's," said Rhett. "Maybe a few years after I started taking global warming seriously, I started thinking about what I would do with that property."

He decided it was the best chance he'd have at making a difference. After seeing an ad in the newspaper he called up John Suppes, president of

Clarum Homes, a Bay Area environmental homebuilding company.

"He contacted me out of the blue one day and said he was interested in building the greenest possible project," said Suppes. The result was Hansen Lane Estates: zero-energy, sustainable homes that are the first of their kind in Contra Costa County.

"This is the fulfillment of a 10-year dream," said Rhett. The first of 10 homes was completed last month and so far four have sold, including one bought by the Rhetts themselves.

The tan-colored, Tuscan-style houses are modeled after Italian architecture. On the outside is a stucco exterior and clay roof. Inside the open floor plan highlights a large "great room" with high ceilings and dark wooden beams.

"It's a very beautiful look," said Suppes. "There's nothing like it in Dan-

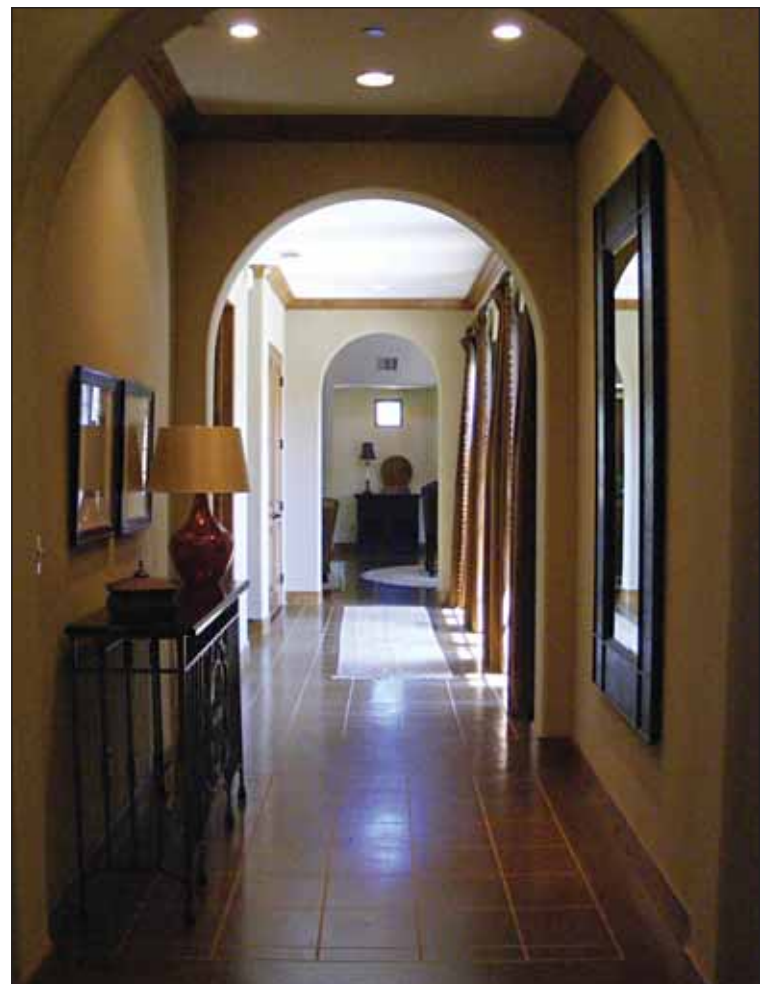
ville anywhere. It's really unique."

But the really unique aspect of the homes is their energy efficient design. They are built to produce nearly as much energy as they consume, using solar power, high-efficiency furnaces, on-demand water heaters and myriad other features.

"All these components together allow the homeowner to save up to 90 percent on their electricity, their gas, their water bill," said Nicole Gittleson, VP of marketing and operations for Clarum Homes.

Cancelling out energy consumption is a two-step process. Step one is to decrease the energy used and step two is to produce energy by converting sunlight to electricity.

To conserve energy, the Hansen Lane homes are built with 10-inch walls insulated with Styrofoam, which helps regulate the temperature inside the home.



The hallways have small circular skylights, called solar tubes, to illuminate areas that would otherwise be dark.



The open floor plan features a large “great room” with high ceilings and the kitchen at one end. The special glass in the windows reflects ultra violet rays away from the homes, which are designed to be environmentally sensitive, high performance and comfortable.



The master bathroom features a 6-foot jetted soaking tub with a marble tub deck. Hot water flows instantly, thanks to the solar thermal system.

More green features

- Fluorescent light bulbs—use less energy
- Ceiling fans—help circulate air
- On-demand water heater—heats water only when you need it
- Dual-flush toilets/low flow showers/front loading washing machine—conserve water
- Engineered wood—lasts longer, reduces waste
- Recycled flooring and construction materials
- Eco-cabinets—made without formaldehyde
- Gray water system—recycled bath and laundry water can be used to irrigate landscaping
- Fiberglass doors—look like wood without sacrificing trees
- Whole house vacuum—reduces dust, improves air quality



The gourmet kitchen has an island, a breakfast bar and slab granite counters with a tumbled marble backsplash. Stainless steel appliances are energy efficient.

Low-emission windows have a similar effect. The special glass functions like a sunscreen for a house, to reflect ultra violet rays away from the home.

There is also a huge emphasis on water conservation. Structured plumbing re-circulates hot water, so hot water begins to flow immediately when you turn on the faucet or shower—water isn’t wasted while you wait for it to heat up.

The landscaping is all native plants that don’t need a lot of water. The garden can be watered less than three days a week and eventually not at all, said Suppes.

Also, the satellite-linked irrigation system is controlled by real weather data.

“On a hot day it’ll water more, on a cool day it’ll water less, and on a rainy day it won’t water at all,” he said.

The system uses up to 40 percent less water than traditional ones.

Now for step two—producing energy. The homes are heated by hydronic heat. Each house has two 4- by 10-foot solar panels on the roof and a storage tank in the garage that holds hot water. As sunlight heats the panels, it charges the water storage tank in the garage.

Use of the sun is also maximized to help illuminate the homes. Each house has 12 to 16 solar tubes, said Suppes. They are small, circular skylights put in wherever there are natural dark spots in the house, such as the hallway at the main entrance.

“My mother was an architect ... She really taught me a lot about architecture and how to build things correctly,” he said. “From a global standpoint, it’s just been a commitment to the environment.”

The homes are LEED certified, the national standard for green building. The single-story and two-story homes range from 3,600 to 5,000 sq. ft. and start at just under \$2 million.

They are marketed not just as green, but also luxury homes - touted as Danville’s most prestigious new address. They even come with a Toyota Prius Hybrid car.

“I look at green building differently,” Suppes said. “It’s both environmentally sensitive and high performance, comfortable.”

Also there are health benefits to living in a green home. An air vacuum system keeps the air fresh and dust free by constantly exhausting stale air and bringing in fresh air.

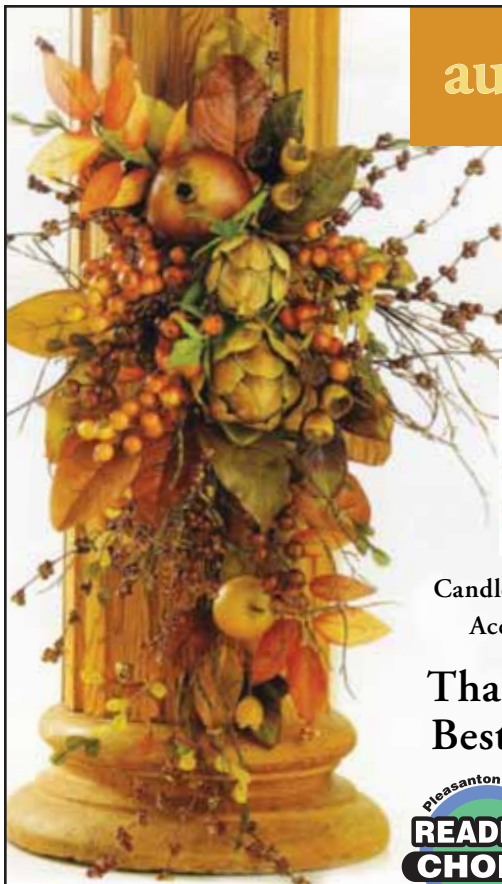
Indoor air is on average five to seven times more polluted than outdoor air, said Suppes. Various products can release gasses and toxins into the sealed home. Garages are the biggest culprits. Carbon monoxide from the running vehicle can seep in to the adjacent home. All the Hansen Lane Estates homes have an exhaust fan in the garage to remedy this.

Almost never having to turn the air conditioning also does wonders for your health, said Suppes. During the May heat spell when temperatures climbed to 105 degrees in Danville, the model home at Hansen Lane Estates never went over 77 degrees, without using any AC.

“When you’re in an air conditioned home or you’re in a more passively cool home, the passively cool home is more comfortable,” he

Continued on **PAGE 11**

autumn tapestry



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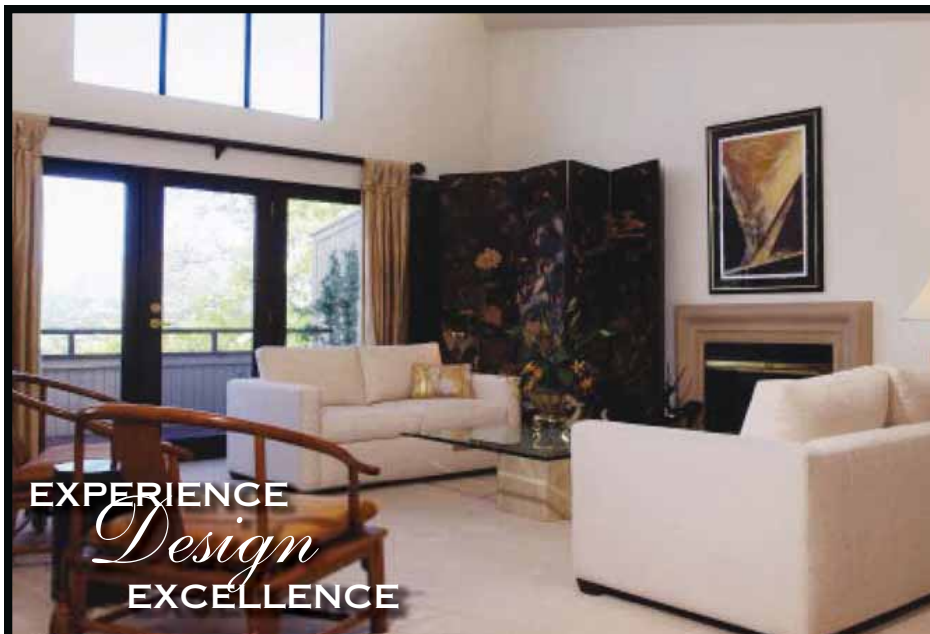
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PHOTOS BY MEGHAN NEAL

The homes have an emphasis on outdoor living, including expansive courtyards with fireplaces, views of the hills in the distance, and easy access to the Iron Horse Trail.

GREEN HOMES

Continued from PAGE 9

said. "And healthier."

Natural lighting increases health and comfort by being softer on the eyes, plus it creates a pleasant ambiance. Suppes said he tries to design homes where you can be inside during the day without turning on any lights.

This is achieved using the skylight-like solar tubes, and also by positioning the homes in a solar passive way. For example, southern facing windows get more sunlight than those facing other directions.

The homes have an emphasis on outdoor living. They have courtyards with fireplaces, views of the hills in the distance, and easy access to the Iron Horse Trail.

Decades ago when the early green homes were being built, a public perception formed that they were unattractive. "I think that's pretty much changing," said Suppes.

Today, people are proud to have solar panels on their roofs, even if passersby do a double take.

"They feel good about it," he said. "If you drive around now, you see panels all over."

The change is owed in part to advances in the art of sustainable architecture and design. It's also brought on by the national trend toward green living, rooted in the energy crisis and threat of global warming.

"I think our dependence on foreign oil has the country in motion now, realizing it's economically unsustainable," said Suppes. "Global warming's a big part of it. The earth's getting warmer and I think there's a percentage of people that realize that."

He added, however, that concern for the environment alone wasn't quite enough to motivate people to make lifestyle changes. The tipping point really happened when the energy crisis started affecting their pocketbooks.

"I think for the majority of peo-



Two 4-by-10-foot solar panels on the roof instantly convert sunlight into electric power; if the homeowner is on vacation, the PG&E meter actually spins backwards.

"I look at green building differently. It's both environmentally sensitive and high performance, comfortable."

John Suppes,
president of Clarum Homes,
an environmental homebuilder

ple it's economic," he said. "I hate to be cynical but I've been building homes and talking about global warming for 10 years ... What affects them directly is what they relate to."

Green homes cost more up front to build, but it's offset by the money saved over time from low energy consumption. People can save up to 85 or 90 percent of their electric and gas bill, said Suppes. "I've had homeowners where their bill is \$2 to \$5 a month and it would have

been \$70 or \$80."

In fact, if the homeowner goes on vacation, the PG&E meter actually spins backwards, putting energy back on the grid.

Green homes have a very high resale value, too. "This kind of technology increases homeowners' resale value," said Gittleman. "It's becoming more and more mainstream, which is really good for the industry and for the homeowner."

Still at \$2 million per home, the potential buyers who come to look at Hansen Lane Estates aren't doing it to save on their PG&E bill, or even because of resale value. The main reason is to have a home that makes sense in today's environment.

"The reward of daily living without significant impact on greenhouse gasses and so forth, I think will be an incentive," said Rhett.

Suppes predicted that in five to 10 years it will be mandated that people build low energy homes.

"This is starting to take off everywhere," he said. "Builders aren't going to have a choice. They're going to have to build green homes in the future." ■

How to improve a lackluster lawn

Fall is the time to prepare for a lush springtime lawn

Fall is the time to repair summer-damaged, lackluster lawns and prepare for the winter season. The time you invest in your lawn this fall will earn you lush, healthier grass next spring.

Follow these four fall lawn-care steps to promote a greener, better-looking, lush lawn next season:

Loosen up and let it breathe:

Your lawn needs air to grow. As a rule of thumb, if you can't see the grass due to leaf coverage, then it's time to remove the lawn debris from the yard. Clearing leaves and clippings in the fall will help by removing the clutter that keeps air and sun from reaching the growing grass.

Aeration and dethatching loosen up the lawn, promote deep root growth, and reduce soil compaction that can keep grass from developing roots deep enough to absorb rainwater. Tackling these tasks in the fall can help ensure the health and beauty of your lawn come spring.

Fortunately, it's easier than ever to avoid the hard work of traditional aeration and dethatching methods. There are now all-natural, spray-on products that aerate and dethatch soil without mechanical means. They also condition the soil at the same time.

Drive out drought damage:

Summer's drought leaves many lawns across the country straw-colored and dormant. To help your lawn recover during and after drought, fertilize it every eight weeks with a slow-release fertilizer. A lawn that has the proper nutrients grows dense and deep and will green up faster. A regularly fed lawn will also be healthier and thicker than an unfed lawn. Couple feedings with infrequent,

deep watering to promote deeper roots and offer a larger reservoir of water to draw from.

Continue to feed the need:

Even lawns not stricken by drought need nourishment in the fall. Fall feeding can bring dramatic improvements as the lawn recovers from summer damage. Fertilizers help "winterize" the lawn, storing vital nutrients so that underground root development can continue until the ground freezes to ready the lawn for fuller growth next spring. Two feedings—timed around Labor Day and the end of October—are recommended for northern lawns, while southern lawns are best-fed four to six weeks before the first frost occurs.

Always overseed:

Once the lawn is aerated and dethatched, look for weak spots in it. Overseeding, the spreading of grass seed directly onto soil within an existing lawn, can improve a lawn's appearance dramatically and eliminate the need for a total lawn renovation. Early fall is the prime time to overseed because the warm soil promotes rapid seed growth and typically, fewer weed problems emerge during this time of the year.

The day before you overseed, be sure to mow the lawn slightly lower than normal and use fertilizer when you seed. For the next several weeks after overseeding, keep the top inch of soil moist to permit growth.

If you follow these simple steps and don't neglect much-needed fall lawn care, you'll be amazed at the difference in your lawn next spring. Fall lawn care is your window to a spectacular spring and summer lawn next season. So "loosen up" and lay the lawn care groundwork this fall.

—ARAcotent

Rakes and pains

Tips to take the pain out of fall cleanup

As the leaves turn different colors and the weather becomes cooler, many Americans begin to engage in outdoor cleanup. Consider the number of Americans injured in yard work accidents every autumn and you may begin to suspect that "fall" is actually short for "pitfall." Fall, it seems, is the season for back injuries, tumbles from ladders and lawn mower accidents.

"Approximately 42 million people seek emergency room treatment for injuries each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," says Brett Taylor, MD, spokesman for the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (AAOS). "Many of these injuries can happen while performing seemingly routine tasks, like autumn yard work."

The AAOS offers a few simple tips to avoid common autumn injuries while working around the yard:

- Use a rake that is comfortable for your height and strength. Wear gloves or use rakes with padded handles to prevent blisters.

- Vary your movement, alternating your leg and arm positions often. When picking up leaves, bend at the knees, not the waist.

- Inspect ladders for loose screws, hinges or rungs. Clean off accumulated mud, dirt or liquids.

- Never use your hands or feet to clear debris from under a lawnmower. Use a stick or broom handle instead. Likewise, never touch the blades with your hands or feet, even if the engine is off. The blade can still move and cause serious injury.

For more lawnmower or ladder safety tips, visit the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons' Web site at www.orthoinfo.org.

—ARAcotent

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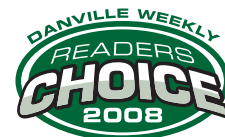
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Going for the gold

Interior designers predict what will be hot this season

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games were a time of great anticipation. Everyone held their breath to see which athletes would emerge victorious, and were awed by what talented individuals were able to achieve in their respective areas of expertise.

There's a similar sense of excitement when it comes to home decorating this fall. With the kids back in school or settled into college, parents have renewed energy and newfound time to make home improvements.

Here are the trends leading interior designers and industry experts across the country have predicted will be hot this season, to help consumers realize their personal bests when it comes to maximizing their homes' potential.

1. The gold medal standard: Wall murals remain reigning champions, according to Todd Imholte, president of www.Murals-YourWay.com—a leader in the production of decorative products for more than 40 years.

2. Team USA: Baby boomers are asking for a new American design that is less traditional yet sensible, and reflects who they are as people, says Jan Hubbard of JH Design Group. They may incorporate mom's furniture into at least one of their rooms, while seeking an updated look in the rest of the house. McKinley Adams of McKinley's Design, sees textures evoking a similar sense of nostalgia, as they tactilely take people back to earlier, pleasurable times in their lives.

3. Lighting the torch: This fall, conventional lighting will be used in unconventional ways, according to Jeff Dross, senior product manager at Kichler Lighting. Chandeliers in the bedroom, pendants in dining rooms and multi-tier sconces in powder rooms and in the foyer will make definitive visual changes in the home. Lighting manufacturers will also continue to offer creative solutions using less electricity to promote energy efficiency.

4. The furniture favorites to win: Shapely and comfortable chairs in bold colors will make an exclamation point in any room, and should be accented by a nice contrast and blend of straight-lined and round



Wall murals will be in fashion this season.

SHUTTERSTOCK

size tables, suggests celebrity design expert, author, and national TV host/spokeswoman Kathy Peterson. Furniture blends in eclectic styles with an eye-appealing mix of bold patterns such as broad stripes, abstract animal prints, circles or mixed graphics will add even more life to living rooms.

5. Synchronized colors: Susan Pantaleo, ASID with Concepts in Design Inc., notes that yellow is emerging as a very versatile color. From sunlight to Dijon mustard, the yellow palette is attention-getting, works with most design schemes, and adds life and vibrancy to a room. On the other side of the rainbow, Peterson sees cool grays, silvers, black and stone colors along with an unexpected hint of gold-tone accents this fall. She recommends metallics or pearlized paints on

accent walls, ceilings, backdrop covers for shelves, and accent shelves.

6. The preliminaries on staging a bedroom: According to Davis Remignanti, FurnitureFind.com's lead design consultant, consumers are interested in creating a bedroom retreat that calms, centers and energizes. He suggests looking for opportunities to showcase souvenirs and family photos, and utilizing walls effectively by adding a fresh coat of paint and an interesting piece of artwork. Another way Peterson recommends to enhance a bedroom is to incorporate an oversized, opulent and tufted upholstered headboard, using tone-on-tone colors that touch the ceiling.

7. Silver medalists: This fall, expect to see a bit more chrome and variations such as

brushed nickel, polished silver and polished nickel, adds Dross. This trend has taken a long time to travel from Europe to the United States, but this is the year it should finally take seed.

8. Competing for wall space: According to Candice Matthews, ASID with CMR Interiors Inc., green goods and wall finishes will dominate this season. Finishes with burlap, limed walls and straw bale walls will be popular, as will burlap-covered walls, Belgium linens, interesting high-end finishes on millwork like driftwood, grey stains, rift wood ceruses and lacquered millwork.

9. All-around family entertainment: Because of the rising popularity of the Nintendo Wii, Xbox, PlayStation and other gaming consoles, homeowners will continue to seek ways to incorporate technology into their living areas in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Home theater cabinets from BDI, the leading manufacturer of home entertainment furnishings featuring storage for three or more components and wire management to hide all necessary connections are available in a variety of gloss and natural stained wood finishes.

Hubbard also recommends consumers place flat-screened televisions within attractive furniture pieces designed specifically for them. Whole-house technology systems that are future proof will also be in demand as technology advances at world-record pace.

10. Celebrate the Olympic culture: Follow the ages-old Chinese practice of Feng Shui to honor the environment indoors. Remignanti recommends introducing water, wind chimes, color and crystals into your bedroom design to enhance the positive energy and romantic appeal while creating a shared sanctuary.

Like the Olympic athletes, all of these are winners in the home decorating arena. The key is to balance diving into popular home decor trends with fine-tuning fundamental styles and techniques that will go the distance.

—ARAcotent

Greening your garage

Being 'eco-friendly' extends all the way to the garage

Your appliances are all energy-efficient models, your home's insulation is top-notch, and there isn't an incandescent light bulb anywhere in your house. Congratulations—your home is "green." But what about your garage?

If your garage is still full of used automotive fluids, pesticides and chemicals, and still sports a drafty old door and little insulation, it just isn't as green as it could be.

Here are some tips for greening the garage:

First, clean out the garage. It will be hard to launch green habits in a cluttered, disorganized environment. Getting organized will not only help you realize what you have in your garage, it will set the stage for easy implementation of your green garage practices.

Recycle or properly dispose of any used motor oil, transmission fluid, antifreeze, pesticides, old paint or other chemicals. If you're not sure

how to discard potentially hazardous fluids, seek advice from your municipal waste disposal program. Many towns and counties now offer residential disposal and/or recycling of hazardous liquids.

If your furnace or hot water heater is located in your garage, be sure both are properly insulated, serviced regularly and not obstructed. Storing boxes, tools and other junk against a hot water heater is not only dangerous, it can hinder the heater's performance.

Consider replacing tools that leave a carbon footprint—such as gas-powered lawnmowers and trimmers—with eco-friendly options like electric trimmers or push mowers. Replace your traditional garden hose with water-efficient soaker or drip hoses. These products use less water by delivering a controlled flow directly to plant roots, where it will do the most good.

Once you've greened everything

you store inside the garage, turn your attention to the structure itself.

If your garage door is an old, drafty aluminum or wood model, consider replacing it with one made of 100 percent recycled wood fibers.

Using recycled wood fibers bonded together with resins, the doors are manufactured without the use of solid-growth timber. A polystyrene insulated core between the outer composite wood panels of the garage doors also makes them energy-efficient, plus offers excellent sound absorbing qualities.

While you're thinking about insulation, don't forget to check the quality of insulation in the garage walls and ceiling, especially if you have a bonus room above your garage, or it shares an interior wall with the rest of your house. Insulating and sheetrocking garage walls can improve your home's overall



ARA

To green the garage, consider replacing the garage door with one made from 100 percent recycled wood fibers.

energy-efficiency. It's even possible to insulate the concrete slab floor of your garage—a major point of heat loss for any garage.

Finally, think about lighting. If you're still using incandescent lights in your garage, you can increase energy efficiency by replacing them

with high efficiency fluorescent bulbs. Or, take advantage of natural light by installing a skylight. Just be sure all weather stripping around your skylight—and around all windows and doors in the garage—is in place and in good repair.

—ARAcotent



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DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

The Woods decided after using their spacious, double-headed, stone shower that there was no need for a door.

BATHROOM

Continued from PAGE 7

Beau Bolce, helped them upgrade the entire house, a spacious Mediterranean that features 14-foot ceilings and large windows that open out to the lush back yard and sweeping views.

Then they began to tackle the bathrooms. "The powder room was an experiment," said Wood. Next they did the guest bathroom upstairs. Those two baths now have upscale fixtures, travertine floors and showers, all in browns and golds.

But they put off remodeling the master bath, wanting time to think about it.

"We lived with it for four years," said Wood. "We wanted it to make sense."

A couple of weeks in Tuscany began to give them ideas.

"The bathrooms were all stone and beautiful woods," he recalled. "We wanted that warm and rich feel."

When they stayed at the St. Regis Monarch Beach last summer, they found their true inspiration.

"It had the feel and flare for what we wanted," said Wood. "Stone, the dark furniture. It was the closest realization of our vision we'd seen to date."

That decided, Keith and Rebecca were walking in downtown Danville soon afterward and happened into the Kitchen and Bath Gallery. Two vanities caught their eye—hand-carved dark cherry wood with emperador marble sinks.

They'd already been working with contractor Dorin Buzatu out of Hayward, who first came when they were replacing the washer and dryer. They'd begun to talk about putting crown molding throughout the house, and soon formed a working relationship,

along with Bolce, who came from Cincinnati to lend his expertise.

"My brother-in-law and Dorin, with our input, worked together on types of stone for the bathroom," said Wood. "They took out the glass block wall and took off woodwork around the windows, recreating molding around the new windows."

They knew they wanted a large shower, which now has double heads and a decorative travertine element to break the expanse. After using the shower while waiting for the door to be ordered, they decided to leave it open.

The spacious bathroom is 285 square feet with 9-foot ceilings.

"We decided not to move any walls, we just moved everything around," Wood explained.

"Almost everything came from Danville except the stone, which came from Oakland," he noted. "The light fixtures came from the Light Source."

They began the project last October and it took about two-and-a-half months, with a wait for the specially ordered skirted jet-air tub.

The bathroom's beauty is not just in the eyes of beholders Rebecca and Keith. It won the 2008 Bathroom Beauty contest in Diablo Publications' Design for Living magazine.

"We discovered the contest about the time the bathroom was being finished," said Wood.

A letter in April notified them they'd won, and it was featured in the spring issue.

"The Woods were able to create an inviting Italianate look without spilling over into fussy opulence," commented the jury. "The bathroom has both an elegant and contemporary edge."

A friend who recently house-sat agreed the bathroom and the entire house are fabulous.

"When we got back, she said, 'Why would you guys ever want to leave this house?'" recalled Wood. ■

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