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Small Spaces

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Wallpaper Trends

Bed and Bath Skylights

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New Home Trends Consumers Want Homes to Fit Their Lifestyles

The booming real-estate market of recent years has challenged builders to meet the demand of consumers in the way of new house construction. What's more, builders have also been given the task of producing not only more homes, but ones that are affordable and meet the evolving preferences of today's home buyer. As a result, homes are being built that cater to the lifestyles of the modern homeowner.

Drive around a new home development and you're likely to discover one obvious fact instantly: new homes are much larger than their older counterparts. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, square footage of homes built in 2004 was nearly 140 percent greater than homes built in 1950. However, you may also notice that although houses are bigger, yards may be smaller or non-existent. Why? Homeowners want large homes to house their toys, but may have less interest in maintaining outdoor living spaces. Here is a look at some of the interior home trends.

In addition to offering larger square footage, many of today's new homes are designed to include useful living spaces. As telecommuting becomes increasingly popular in today's business environment, dedicated home offices top the list of wants from home buyers, and these rooms are wired for business. A recent study by the Consumer Electronics Association said that approximately 60 percent of new homes include a network of high-speed data, voice and HDTV-capable wiring.



An open floor plan is also a common theme among new construction. Buyers are no longer interested in a formal dining room and living room to act as an unused showcase. Rather, some builders have nixed the living room in lieu of a great room, which includes a spacious eat-in-kitchen that opens up to a den or game room. The recreation area is decidedly designed around flat-screen televisions and elaborate home-theater systems. Gone are the days when homeowners would house electronics within an entertainment center or behind closed doors. Today's gadget lovers want their top-of-the-line products on display and in use.

With living spaces adjacent to the kitchen/eating area, family members can congregate in the same area while enjoying their respective activities. These spaces are also great for homeowners who enjoy entertaining in their homes.

Elaborate laundry rooms have also been added to new construction master plans. Yet the jury is still out as to the preferred location of such laundry rooms. Some homeowners prefer it on the ground floor, off the kitchen, to act as a mudroom or transition space into the body of the home. Others want it upstairs or by the bedrooms where the majority of dirty laundry is generated.

Another room which has popped up as of late is a private space for some family members, like in-laws or caregivers. That is why bedrooms off the kitchen or garage have become common. And in regard to the garage: it's bigger than in past years. Many new garages are built two feet deeper so that minivans and SUVs will fit comfortably.

With homes much larger, energy costs are likely a concern for homeowners. That's why many builders are also including "smart home" features, equipping their houses with technology that controls home systems from one location. Heating, security, cooling, audio and other systems can be programmed, helping owners use fewer resources. These systems are also accessed via the Web, so homeowners can turn the heat down a notch anywhere they have access to the Internet.

As homeowners' preferences continue to evolve through the years, builders will surely have an ear open to their wants and needs to build homes that will offer the most bang for their buck. MS

Creativity Transforms Historic Homes

Like a lot of people, interior designer Charles Riley had a somewhat romanticized view of living in a historic structure. But when he purchased a small 19th century frame building as his dream project, he found his expectations challenged and his daydream in serious need of modification. Riley was able to make his dream a reality, thanks to lots of flexible, creative thinking and some of the latest in home-building products, along with a commitment to energy efficiency and a respect for the architecture of the building. “I had this idea of moving into an antique house and living with all of the bumps and warts and quirks,” recalls the designer. The building had good bones, but it quickly became apparent that its “bumps and warts” would have to be dealt with in order to make it habitable. Originally built on a stone foundation with a dirt floor, the structure had no basement. At some point a concrete floor had been added, but with the building’s location at the base of a hill, run-off and natural condensation had created rotting wood along the perimeter of the house and a moisture problem inside. There was a permanent puddle in the middle of the floor. The place also came with peeling paint, ancient radiators, drafty uninsulated windows and outmoded plumbing and electrical service. “I changed my opinion about restoring old buildings,” Riley admits, acknowledging the need to strike a balance between maintaining historic character and providing 21st-century comforts. “I don’t subscribe to the theory that a building has to be just like it was,” he says. “For an old building to be useful it has to embrace modern technology. Making an old building work is the ultimate form of ‘green.’ You have to cherry-pick what is worth saving and weigh the value against the trade-

offs in energy efficiency and cost.” The interior was completely gutted, and dormers and an addition helped to maximize living space. Solving the moisture problem was a top priority. Decaying wood at the foundation was replaced with new rot-resistant lumber, and the yard was regraded to channel runoff away from the house. Inside, the concrete slab floor remained cold and damp. The solution was DRICore, a modular, raised subfloor sys-



A modular subfloor system installed over cold, damp concrete floors helped turn an old building into a comfortable, stylish home. At right, the furnished living room in the refurbished structure.



nal to the house,” he says. A new heating, air-conditioning and ventilation system, essential for good indoor air quality, was installed. A high-efficiency gas forced-air furnace was tucked under the stair-

tem designed specifically for use over concrete (www.dricore.com). “The raised subfloor kept the finished floors away from the cold damp concrete and made me feel a lot more secure about the finished floor installation. It was an incredibly easy solution,” Riley says. The subfloor provided another benefit. “People can’t get over that such an old building could have such a level floor,” the designer says. “DRICore has a wonderful shimming system that allowed us to compensate for small uneven spots in the floor. We used a lot of shims, but the floor is level and very solid.” Riley selected an engineered wood wide-plank finished floor. “It looks like distressed, reclaimed wood, and everyone asks if it’s origi-

case leading to the second floor, and small round openings in the ceiling perimeter are unobtrusive alternatives to conventional registers set in floors and walls. New insulation and new, energy-efficient windows in a historically correct style were installed to bring the house up to current standards for thermal efficiency. Riley carved out a living room, powder room and kitchen-family room on the first floor and two bedrooms and a full bath on the second floor. To create a comfortable, welcoming environment, he decorated his new home with an artful mix of antiques, family favorites, retro pieces and new furnishings. Today, with its coat of deep red paint, crisp white accents, and modern comforts, the former building is a fine example of sensitive and practical repurposing of a historic structure. MS

Bedroom and Bath Skylights

Provide Privacy, Space & Health Benefits

Improving the Quality of Natural Light in your home

*I*n today's homes, many of which are on small lots with close-by neighbors, privacy is sometimes hard to find without closing the doors and covering the windows. And privacy in bedrooms and bathrooms is not just a convenience, it's a necessity. What's the answer? Simply look up.

With natural light from above, homeowners can have privacy plus more wall space for storage or decorating (where windows would normally be), added ventilation, and health benefits that come with more natural light.

According to Joe Patrick, senior product manager for VELUX America, venting skylights provide those benefits and more. "In bathrooms especially," Patrick says, "venting skylights reduce condensation build-up while providing a beautiful view of the sky above, without affording anyone the opportunity to see in. Plus, you get the use of wall space, where a window isn't necessary, for decorating or another form of space utilization."

According to research from American Standard, skylights are selected as the number-one option in "dream bathrooms." And modern skylights offer as many, or more, features for managing light than standard windows. For the ultimate in convenience, electric venting skylights

are available with remote control, blinds, shades, awnings, insect screening, and automatic rain sensors. There are also models available with electrochromic glass that can be darkened by remote control to reduce light and solar gain without restricting the view of the sky.

"And," Patrick says, "while homeowners are considering skylights, they should remember that venting skylights in the kitchen can release hot air and odors while providing more balanced light for brighter days and more pleasant cooking and dining."

Skylights also address important health considerations. One in five Americans suffers varying degrees of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a condition in which the symptoms can include depression and fatigue due to lack of sufficient daylight. Skylights can help by admitting abundant daylight while visually expanding rooms in any style or size home.

Perhaps, for whatever reason, you can't use a traditional skylight. For simple, quick installation in areas where larger skylights may not be needed or just won't fit, a VELUX Sun Tunnel™ skylight can easily provide abundant natural light in smaller bathrooms, entry areas or hallways, pantries, walk-in closets, or other smaller, confined areas. In addition to highly reflective rigid tunnels, they also offer flexible tunnels that fit around virtually any attic obstructions, such as HVAC equipment, from the roof to the ceiling.

For skylight selection literature, call 1-800-283-2831 or visit www.veluxusa.com. For independent agency information visit www.nfrc.org or www.efficientwindows.org. MS

Skylights provide privacy plus natural light and extra ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens as well as other areas of the home.

Tips for Brightening Up Kitchens

Leaving windows unadorned maximizes the flow of light into a kitchen.

For the past decade, the kitchen has reigned supreme as the choice gathering spot for family activities and entertaining. Airy, open kitchens can transform the mood of the room and its occupants.

According to the experts at Simonton Windows®, there are several things homeowners can do to transform their kitchens into bright, welcoming spaces, energized with natural light:

Adopt the popular trend of having “naked windows” in the kitchen. By using only minimal window coverings, such as valances at the top, the windows allow in more light and can act as a transition to the outdoors.

When remodeling, add a bay or bow window to maximize the flow of sunlight into the room and give the kitchen an expansive feeling. Constructed of three or more windows mullered together at 30- or 45-degree angles, bay windows can be made to incorporate a window seat that provides a comfortable spot for homeowners to grab a cup of coffee and curl up with a magazine. A bow window, which is created by mulling together a

multitude of windows in a gentle arch, creates a gentle circular effect in a room and can offer the perfect backdrop for a kitchen table.

Smaller than a bay or bow window, a garden window generally sits higher up on a wall. Many homeowners position a garden window directly over a sink and grow herbs, potted plants or starter seedlings on the shelves throughout the year. Simonton offers a garden window with dual, fully-operational casement side lites to allow in air and sunlight.

Order several windows mulled together at the factory to give the impression of a small “wall of windows” and to maximize light flow into the kitchen. You can request that operating windows (such as double hungs or casements) be topped with non-operable transom windows to enhance the flow of light into the kitchen.

Brighten up the entire kitchen by painting your window trim bright white. Take this “whitewash” a step further and paint your kitchen cabinets white also, so that the entire room is bright and cheery, allowing light to “play” throughout the room. Selecting low-maintenance white vinyl frames for your windows will also help lighten up the kitchen.

For more information call 1-800-SIMONTON to request the free booklet, “What Every Homeowner Should Know About Window Replacement.” MS

How to Professionally Finish Your Floors and Furniture



Refinishing furniture, woodwork and floors is much easier than most people imagine — you just have to go about it one step at a time.

According to Eric Chaimberg of Swing Paints, the country's leading manufacturer of wood finishing products, professional finishing results can be achieved if you follow several important steps.

Based on years of experience and know how, Chaimberg says the most important thing to remember is "a good start always means a good finish." And the best way to ensure a good finish is to take your time and prepare the surface properly. Be sure you have all the materials you will need before you start.

Here is a host of items Chaimberg says you will need prior to beginning any project:

- Bristle or foam brushes
- Rags or cheese cloth
- Steel wool or synthetic pads
- Gloves
- Drop cloth

Surface preparation

Set yourself up in a clean, well-lit area. For previously finished pieces, Chaimberg

recommends you use a cleaner, such as, Circa 1850 Furniture Cleaner to remove all dirt, grime, wax and polish from the wood. For tougher stains, you may want to try Circa 1850 Super DeGooper. Any repairs that need to be done such as filling nail holes or dents should be completed after stripping but before sanding and staining.

Sanding

The next step is to lightly sand the wood to provide a smooth uniform surface. "Sand enough to obtain the desired finish smoothness yet not enough to gouge the wood or sand through the veneer," Chaimberg says. Stripping closes the grain of the wood to the penetration of stain and finish. Sanding reopens the grain, evens out

any discoloration that may have been left by a previous stain, and erases any scratches or blemishes in the surface.

Finishing

To add a protective finish to your surface, Chaimberg recommends using Circa 1850 Bowling Alley Polyurethane. "Apply this clear finish to those tired

old floors or that newly stripped flea market find and you'll appreciate how fast it dries," he added. "It dries so fast you can re-coat in as little as two hours. Imagine being able to apply 3 coats in just one day."

Because of its non-yellowing clear formula, all you'll see is the beauty of the wood shining through. And your

wood surface will be protected with the same hard, durable finish used on bowling alleys. Chaimberg says Circa 1850 Bowling Alley Polyurethane is recommended for use on all interior wood surfaces; including floors, cabinets, doors, furniture, and paneling. For more information or tips on finishing, visit www.circa1850.com. MS

The Dining Room

Improve Your Dining Experience

by: John Shelabarger

The dining room adds an enjoyable social dimension to the consumption of food. It can bring a family together at mealtimes as well as enabling people to host gatherings for friends and colleagues. Dining areas are common features of a kitchen or living room, but a separate room set aside for eating can increase the level of intimacy and relaxation.

Ideally, the decor of a dining room should be soothing and unobtrusive. Bright colours may detract from one's culinary skills and prove distracting. Instead use plain, deep colours to help create an intimate, warm atmosphere. Furnishings should compliment the dining room rather than divert attention so spectacular, over-elaborate paintings or pictures may not be the ideal kind of decor.

Lighting is one of most important features of a dining room playing an important role in creating the right sort of atmosphere. Dimmer lights can be used very effectively to maintaining the correct ambience and are easily adjustable, according to mood and purpose. Candles are also worth considering and can help to create the relaxing kind of lighting so important to a dinner engagement.

The table is central to a dining room. Round tables are good for informal gatherings and can cater for a number of guests. However, they don't usually have the space for serving dishes and other dining accessories during a meal, which means excessive clutter during dining. Rectangular tables are more suited for this purpose and are able to house larger gatherings of four to eight people, as well

as providing space for extra dishes and plates. Oval tables with extendable leaves provide a space-effective alternative, able to cater for even more guests. In addition, they are easily stored during non-dining periods.

Dining chairs usually come as part of a dining set and are designed in proportion to the table. If you chose to buy separately close attention should be paid to the chair's dimensions - seating height is of course very important. It would be also be a good idea to include cushions for dining chairs to ensure the utmost comfort for the occupants. Popular versions come with attachable bows that can be tied to the chair frame.

Mealtimes come with a large collection of accessories such as serving dishes and plates. A table can fill up quickly with these items so adequate storage space is important. Sideboards can prove attractive enhancements to a dining room. Although the scale of these furniture pieces should be carefully considered - over-sized sideboards can have an imposing effect on a dining area. Hostess trolleys offer another alternative and can be easily moved around the room. They're also useful at keeping plates and dishes warm.

Whatever kind of decor you choose, remember that your dining experience should be relaxing and pleasurable. Some of the ideas mentioned above should help you realize your dining room's full potential.



Fuel Efficiency With the Addition of a Vent-Free Gas Appliance

Vent-free gas appliances provide a convenient way for homeowners to add warmth and ambiance to any room while cutting heating costs.



Whether it is driving a car or heating a home, consumers today are looking for ways to get the most for their energy dollar. When it comes to home heating this winter, adding a 99 percent fuel-efficient vent-free gas fireplace, stove, log, or heater set helps keep rooms of the home warm while cutting heating costs.

Cut Home-Heating Costs

Despite price increases over the past few years, natural or propane gas still provides more heat for the dollar than any other fuel. Vent-free gas fireplaces and stoves are the most efficient gas space heating appliances. Vent-free appliances draw in room air, then heat and recirculate the air to provide maximum comfort. There is no chimney or vent to cause heat loss. Consumers can also cut their home-heating bill through zone heating. By installing and using a vent-free

gas fireplace, fireplace insert, stove or log set in the rooms they use most, consumers can turn down the thermostat on their central furnace. **Vent-Free: the Ultimate in Flexibility** Adding a vent-free heater to a new, existing or remodeled kitchen, rec-room or family room gives a room ambiance and warmth without costly remodeling changes. There is no need for a chimney or a hole-in-the-wall for a vent. All that is needed is access to a natural gas or propane supply, so vent-free units can often be installed in basements and on inside walls where vented appliances often cannot. Installation costs of vent-free options can be up to 60 percent less than the cost of installing vented heating appliances. "Because they are easy to install, a vent-free gas appliance gives today's homeowner an affordable way to

enhance any room of the house," says Sue Walker, chairman of the Vent-Free Gas Products Alliance. "The flexibility and ease of installation of these products, along with their 99 percent efficiency, make vent-free gas fireplaces, stoves, and gas logs a popular option for homeowners." Vent-Free Fireplaces, Stoves or Log Sets: Add a Hearth Product to Any Room Vent-free gas products are no longer found just in the family room. A fireplace can now be economically added to most any room, even on an inside wall. Vent-free gas hearth products come in varied sizes, from small and compact to full size. Manufacturers offer a beautiful array of ready-to-assemble fireplace mantels in optional finishes that enhance the total décor of the space. From the living room, kitchen, dining room or office, there is a vent-free fireplace, stove or

log set available to suit any location. A vent-free gas heater is also ideal to warm limited-use, hard-to-heat areas such as a basement, garage, room addition, sun porch, or recreation room. Often the home's central heating system does not extend to these areas, and the addition of vent-free gas appliances can economically convert these spaces into valuable living space.

Heat at the Touch of a Button

With today's new options in thermostats and handheld remote controls, it has never been easier to keep your room at the exact level of heating comfort you want. Just dial in a comfort setting and your vent-free unit will maintain an even temperature in the room. Many models provide a control to have your vent-free appliance automatically go on and off at specific times.

Safe, Supplemental Heating

All listed vent-free gas appliances are equipped with an Oxygen Detection Safety-Pilot (ODS), which assures a safe level of oxygen in the living space. In addition, extensive independent testing has verified that vent-free gas appliances meet or exceed the nationally recognized guidelines for indoor air quality.

Heat When You Need it Most

Many homeowners are concerned about loss of heating during power outages due to ice storms or other factors. Enjoy the added security of knowing that vent-free gas appliances, which are not dependent on electricity, will provide heat when a central or other space-heating appliance cannot operate.

Check with a Qualified Dealer/Installer

Most states in the U.S. now allow for the sale and installation of vent-free gas products. However, there are 45,000

different code officials in the country, and some areas have not changed their codes to the new International "I" codes. Check with your salesperson, installer or local codes officials to determine the best product for your home. Vent-Free Means Versatility

Whether remodeling or just adding a fireplace, stove or log set to the busiest part of your home, vent-free products offer the convenience, safety, flexibility and efficiency that make heating a home easy. And the addition of a fireplace to a home can add value to a house. The addition of one fireplace can add between 11 and 18 percent to a home's value, according to the National Association of Realtors. More information about vent-free fireplaces, stoves, fireplace inserts and log sets can be found at www.ventfree.org. MS

25 Ways to Transform A Room

Homeowners looking for ways to brighten up the look of their homes with fast do-it-yourself enhancements can find the answer to their decorating needs with durable urethane millwork pieces. The lightweight pieces are easy to install and ideal for quick upgrade projects in every room of the home. The experts at Fypon offer these how-to ideas for fast results:

1 Surround an interior room divider with pilasters and a crosshead to make transitioning from one room to another a unique experience.

2 Add a two-piece ceiling medallion around the top of a light fixture or ceiling fan in less than 10 minutes. Interlocking pieces snap together quickly for fast results.

3 Upgrade your dining room by adding chair rail moulding about a third of the way up the wall and encircling the room. Paint or wallpaper below or above the rail to give the room a more elegant feeling.

4 Install corbels to the top of cabinets to present a more finished look in your kitchen or bathroom.

5 Jazz up your windows by adding stylized door/window head crossette trim to surround a window. Bump-out texture and design at the top of the window of this no-miter project makes the results outstanding.

6 Block it up ... with plinth blocks. To surround a window, make straight moulding cuts and then put plinth blocks in the corners. No mitering and your window has a new frame surround in less than 15 minutes.

7 Add depth to your interior windows by placing window panels beneath a windowsill. Add moulding around the panel and the entire window for eye-popping results!

8 Make a fast towel rack by drilling holes into the center of two brackets. Insert a painted dowel and you have an instant way to

hang towels!

9 Faux finish decorative crown moulding and add to the top of a room to draw attention higher in the room.

10 Look up and trim down. Create vertical 3-D "stripes" on a bedroom wall using flat trim mouldings. Paint different colors

between the strips or keep the entire room one color with a contrasting moulding stripe!

11 Upgrade the look of a boring kitchen island by adding decorative brackets or corbels as accent pieces.

12 Replace a worn-out handrail or banister in the home with mouldings or flat trim. Add decorative brackets or corbels beneath the new rail at regular intervals for a classy look.

13 Arrange a collage of ceiling medallions on a wall for a decorative feature. Faux finish, paint and stain the medallions in a variety of unique colors.

14 Add a one-piece fireplace mantel surround to an existing fireplace or create a faux fireplace area using these durable accent pieces.

15 Break up a full mirror wall in a bedroom by adding straight lengths of moulding in interesting patterns. The mouldings will create a visual impact in the room.

16 Add a keystone to the top of any interior room door to give an elegant look to the room.

17 Use a window crosshead for a fast and easy shelf.

18 Flank the window opening between two rooms (like a kitchen and family room) with a pair of urethane shutters. The lightweight shutters can be stained or painted to accent the walls.

19 Place brightly-painted triangular, rectangle, circle and other geometric trim pieces on the walls in a child's room to create a bold, visual look.

20 Install raised window panels side-by-side on the wall in a room to create a unique wainscot look.

21 Add a scalloped moulding border to a child's room to launch into a princess or medieval theme for the room.

22 Accent a cherished collection of Art Deco paintings or artwork with deco mouldings around a room in bold geometric fashions.

23 Use crosshatch or square decorative panels made out of lightweight urethane to serve as see-through room dividers or "gates" to keep toys, pets and children separated from expensive knick-knacks.

24 Since the pineapple is the universal sign of hospitality, add a decorative half-round or full round pineapple accent piece in the entryway to your home.



Surround an interior door with a set of pilasters and a door crosshead to instantly upgrade the look of a room.

25 Create a design for a backsplash using urethane applique tiles. Decorative and resistant to moisture, these 17-inch squares offer lots of detail and can be painted or faux finished.

Visit www.fypon.com for other creative ideas and to view an on-line catalog of more than 6,000 moulded millwork products. MS



Making the Most of Small Spaces

Many people, especially those living in big cities or young people just starting out, realize early on that space comes at a premium. Whether you're fresh out of college and need to stretch your paycheck or living in a big city with big-city prices, occupying a small apartment doesn't necessarily mean you need to be cramped all the time. The following tips should help you make any small space seem more spread out.

- Use bright colors on the walls. If you're allowed to paint the walls, by all means do it. While darker colors are more popular, using bright colors to paint the walls makes a room appear more spacious. Darker colors make a room's walls appear to be closing in, whereas lighter colors give the illusion that the walls are receding. Multicolored or patterned walls often cause the eyes to pause a lot, making a room seem smaller.

- Keep scale in mind. While it may seem as though putting larger furniture in your room will make it appear smaller, fewer, larger pieces of furniture will make the room appear more open and less cluttered. Whenever possible, keep from putting too much furniture in a small area, even if the items you're putting in are small.

The color of the furniture is also something to note. Darker furniture is preferred because darker furniture, such as a chair or chest of drawers, will contrast with your

walls, making the room appear larger than it actually is. If you so choose, you can go for the blending effect instead, where you simply upholster your furniture in material that's the same color as your walls, making the furniture essentially disappear into the walls.

- Utilize wall space. A big concern for many living in tight quarters is where to put books. While a bookcase can look nice, it can also

take up lots of space. Hang a few shelves on the wall above your desk and put your books there. The easy accessibility will still be there, but now you'll have more floor space as well. And remember to leave space between books with collectibles, vases, etc. Books crammed all in a row will seem cluttered.

- Let the light shine in. Much like darker paint makes a room appear smaller, rooms without adequate

lighting appear small as well. Don't block windows, and let the outside light shine in. This will make the room appear more welcoming and larger. Also, make sure the natural or manufactured light is even throughout the room. Dark corners or areas without adequate lighting make small spaces seem smaller.

- Keep the floor free of clutter. Try to keep your belongings in one or two designated areas throughout a room.

Having multiple items strewn about will severely limit your available floor space, a lack of which makes a room appear very small. A clean floor allows for you to move around more freely, something that will make the room feel larger than it really is.

- Use mirrors or paintings to give the illusion of depth. Mirrors or paintings that feature lots of depth

can make a room appear larger than it really is. While these are certainly optical illusions, they serve a great purpose when attempting to make a small space seem less cramped. Any empty walls you have that you're not quite sure what to do with would probably be perfect to house a mirror.

MS



Those who reside in close quarters can do a number of things to make their space seem larger.

