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Style with a Conscience

Enjoy the 'Suite' Life

More Patio Choices

Curbside Wow

Going Green

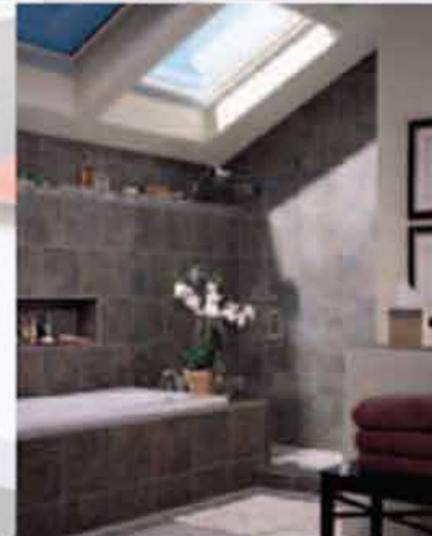
Kitchen Couture

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Style With a Conscience

Functional used to be the best word to describe “green” home design and decor. But, luckily, “green” has been undergoing a glamorous transformation. With more demand for environmentally-friendly products, designers and manufacturers are introducing upscale and luxurious options that prove stylish and “good for the earth” can go hand in hand.

According to home improvement expert Leslie Segrete, “Eco-inspired home decor products have become more beautiful and elegant. With so many great materials and choices available, you’ll be able to decorate stylishly, while making a difference for our planet.” Here are some of her tips on getting started:

Green Foundation

Build an eco-friendly room from the ground up. Use 100 percent recycled floor tiles made of materials such as rich

recycled leather to provide a fashionable and environmentally responsible alternative to chemically-treated rugs and manmade flooring.

Segrete suggests asking for products made from rapidly renewable resources, such as fast-growing bamboo. “This wood-like flooring offers great design, yet requires no replanting and little fertilization or pesticides,” she says. Another choice is cork, which is harvested from the bark of a cork oak tree -- without harming the tree. It provides a soft, cushioned floor under foot, making it ideal for high traffic areas or rooms needing some sound-proofing.

New carpeting is available to suit all styles and tastes, so look for those that are biodegradable and chemical-free. Made from hemp, linen, wool or cotton, they come in a range of colors made from natural dyes. The Ethos Company

uses a rubber backing made from recycled windshield wipers while the Bicicleta brand of carpeting has backing made from recycled bicycle tires.

Wise Walls

Sherwin-Williams and other paint companies have recently introduced water-based and low VOC paints such as the Harmony line with soft, nature-inspired hues, to combat the environmental hazards often caused by chemical-laden paints. In addition, wall paper manufacturer, Phillip Jeffries, is now producing alternative home wall coverings made from earth-friendly materials, like hemp, linen, bamboo, cork and recycled paper. Stylish, sophisticated and natural, these wall coverings are anything but ordinary.

But Segrete recommends something more adventurous. “For a unique look that combines color and texture, try American Clay Plaster,” she says. “This blend of pure clay and non-toxic pigment transforms any wall surface. An array of colors can be created with different tints and finishes that appear smooth, rustic or even Old World.”

Faucet Flow

Homeowners waste gallons of water every day leaving the faucet running while washing their hands and performing other tasks at the sink. But,

new hands-free electronic faucets, like the Destiny powder room faucet from ShowHouse by Moen, conserve water while reflecting your personal style. With a sleek minimalist design and a distinctly-styled spout that produces a sheeting water flow, the Destiny faucet reduces water waste, providing water only when it is needed. “Make the switch to hands-free and watch your style quotient go up as your daily water usage goes down -- a win-win situation for you and the environment,” says Segrete.

Tankless water heaters are another great solution for home energy savings. Similar to the hands-free faucet, these systems heat water only when needed. In many cases, this can add up to a significant energy savings -- more than 20 percent each year. Plus, tankless heaters reduce the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as well.

Window to Tomorrow

High-efficiency, large-scale windows let more daylight in the home and decrease the need for electrical lighting. But, large scale windows can sometimes call for large, expensive and resource-consuming window treatments. For a great green option, forgo window treatments altogether and install frosted glass panes throughout your home. To

supplement natural lighting, replace energy-wasting incandescent light bulbs with energy-efficient fluorescent lighting fixtures.

Furniture Faux Pas

Each year, millions of furniture items are dumped at landfills, polluting the environment and wasting precious space. “Consider holding a garage sale or donating to Good Will or other charitable organizations,” suggests Segrete. “You can also shop at your local flea market or antique store and do your part in helping to recycle old items while finding unique shabby chic treasures that are no longer in production.”

If new furniture is a must, look for pieces created from a single piece of rapidly renewable wood. For couches and chairs, look to companies that produce sustainable selections such as Lee Industries. The company’s Natural Lee sofas are made from recycled plastic bottles and use soy and water-based finishes.

As “going green” continues to gain momentum, it’s easier than ever before to make a style statement in your home while still having a conscience. ARA





ENJOYING THE 'SUITE' LIFE

Master bedrooms have evolved over the years. In the past, bedrooms and homes in general were built small in scale. People didn't need much space in the bedroom - it was simply a place for sleeping. Today, however, most homeowners see the bedroom as a retreat, a place to escape the kids for a while, or just a space that's personal and off-limits to the remainder of the family. Some even want an area to call his or her own, apart from a spouse.

With this in mind, master bedrooms have grown in size and purpose for the past several years. They now encompass exercise areas, TV-viewing spots and hotel-esque bathrooms. As such, they've morphed from bedrooms into "suites," and trends for master suites are continually evolving. Here's a look at some of the most popular:

Concealed kitchens: Dreaming of enjoying a midnight snack without tiptoeing down to the kitchen? It can be a reality when a mini kitchen is included in a

master-suite plan. Some homeowners opt for a small sink, refrigerator and microwave to keep snacks on hand. For others, an electric coffeepot is a luxury - simply program to brew in the morning and enjoy a cup of joe while still under the covers. Kitchen works can be concealed in decorative cabinetry or armoires that mimic the look of bedroom furniture.

Adjoining rooms: For those who need extra space in the bedroom, take down a wall to an adjoining bedroom to enlarge the suite. Many empty-nesters are doing just this, absorbing the space of a former bedroom and creating a doorway into this area from the master bedroom. The extra space can serve as the foundation for a bathroom, exercise area or office within the master bedroom itself. Some like to keep it partitioned off from the rest of the master bedroom as a private reading nook or quiet retreat when kids have taken over the rest of the home. **Luxury spa:** Having a master bath is an important component of the suite

concept. Those with the means and the space are taking master bathrooms to entirely new levels, replete with spa tubs, separate steam showers (with room for two), dual vanities to give each occupant space to primp, and closed-off areas for the commode, so the bathroom can be occupied by two at any time. **His-and-hers closets:** The concept of one large, walk-in closet has been replaced with dual closets for both residents of the master suite. This allows for more personal space and organization of clothing and other items. Closet organizational systems are key to creating functional space in these areas. There also may be a shared dressing or vanity area.

More outside light: To complete the inviting atmosphere of a master suite, homeowners are opting to replace smaller, dated windows with larger ones to let in more natural light. A bay window with a window seat creates a cozy spot for reading or daydreaming.

Perfect Home Survey Says Garage Doors Must Be Durable

When it comes to garage doors, homeowners want durability first and foremost.

Homeowners across the country have spoken in the Perfect Home Survey, a new independent research study conducted by Knowledge Wave and commissioned by JELD-WEN, a leading manufacturer of reliable windows and doors. The largest number of respondents, 45 percent, said durability is the number-one attribute they look for in a garage door, followed by appearance and energy efficiency.

“Because it is often the most visible exterior element of a home, the garage door is getting more attention from today’s homeowners,” says John Monfore, product marketing manager at JELD-WEN. “Our survey found that homeowners want a long-lasting, dependable garage door in addition to great curb appeal.”

It’s no wonder that garage doors are receiving closer looks from homeowners. The Perfect Home Survey revealed that the garage door is now the most frequently used exterior door when entering the home for both men (42 percent) and women (41 percent). The front door was close behind,

followed by the side and back doors.

Manufacturers have responded to this call for reliability and increased visual appeal with alternative materials that stand up to the toughest conditions. For example, JELD-WEN offers garage doors that are made from the same strong, wood composite material throughout, from the trim to the face of the door. This technology offers high performance with very little maintenance, and helps prevent common problems such as cracking, splitting, shrinking, expanding, rusting and denting.

Here are some additional garage-related findings from the Perfect Home Survey, plus tips to consider when selecting a new garage door or redoing a garage space:

Boost Curb Appeal - Appearance is the second-most important attribute of a

garage door behind durability. Designs have come a long way from the days when all garage doors looked the same. In fact, manufacturers have recently introduced a variety of new, eye-catching styles, such as Carriage House and Old World designs for Craftsman as well as Mediterranean-style homes.

Bring in the Light - Nearly 60 percent of survey participants do not believe their garages contain enough natural light. When selecting a new garage door, options include arched, rectangular or square window inserts, a popular feature that provides detailed design accents and natural light. The window inserts are important for homeowners wanting to use their garages as living spaces such as a workshop, utility room or children’s play area.

Choose materials wisely - When asked specifically about cutting energy costs, 65 percent of survey respondents say

installing an energy efficient garage door is important, and nearly the same number say they are willing to spend extra for the cost-saving benefit. Choosing the right material is important for gaining energy efficiency and durability. Wood composite material resists common problems such as cracking, splitting, shrinking, expanding, rusting and denting.

Create multifunctional spaces - One-quarter of survey participants are planning to remodel their garage in the next 12 months, and most say they will use the remodeled space for parking, storage and hobbies. For additional usability, consider renovating your garage space to include a workout room or a recreation and play area. The key is making the garage a place attractive not only for cars but also for people.



Model Home Tricks Help Maximize Your Home's Value

Perfectly manicured, emerald green lawns flanked by floral beds. Acres of granite counter top and gleaming stainless steel appliances. And everywhere you look are surfaces clean enough to eat off -- that's the appeal of the model home.

There's a reason why model homes look the way they do. Builders know that everything they do to make a house look visually appealing amounts to actual dollars, and often thousands of dollars, added to the sale price. The same principal applies to your home.

Whether you're planning on selling, or just sprucing up your house to make it more enjoyable to live in, mimicking the ideal appearance of a model home can yield impressive results. Here are some tips and trends to help make your house a showplace:

* Start with curb appeal. This is especially important if you're planning on selling. First impressions are lasting ones and unmown grass or shabby planting beds make the kind of statement you want to avoid. Keep grass well trimmed and planting beds watered. If you don't have a green thumb, choose easy-to-grow flowers, like petunias, to add pizzazz to your landscaping.

* Cleanliness is essential. Whether you're selling your home or living in it, keeping it clean is a top priority. Clean homes are better preserved, more healthful places to live. And homebuyers rank dirty houses at the top of their turn-offs list. You probably take care of the kitchen and baths regularly, but don't forget the need to shampoo the carpet occasionally, especially if it is worn or old. And take the time to do the windows -- you'll be amazed at the difference it makes to your home's appearance, both inside and out.

* Cut the clutter. Living in a cluttered environment is harmful on so many levels -- from your home's sell-appeal to your own self esteem. Decreasing clutter opens up the visual space in your home and can inspire greater decorating creativity.

* Take care of repairs as quickly as possible. Some things simply can't wait, like a leaking roof. But try not to put off small repairs that may not seem consequential -- like the toilet that needs the handle jigged every now and then. Small repairs can become big problems if they add up or get worse with time -- and they always do.

* Put your decorating dollars into the rooms and trends that give the biggest payoff in

both your enjoyment of your home and appeal to potential buyers. Focus on the kitchen and baths. No penny spent in those rooms is ever wasted, whether you're simply dressing up the bath with new towels or installing granite counter tops in the kitchen. Granite counter tops are a must in model homes, as are gleaming clean baths.

* Consider adding an interior designer touch, such as a custom wall mural. Increasingly popular among designers, wallpaper murals are popping up in model homes across the country. Designers are using them to enhance kitchens, brighten baths and create bold statements in common areas of the house, according to Murals Your Way, makers of easy-to-install custom wallpaper murals. "To have someone paint a mural costs thousands," states interior designer, Lisa Fields who installed a wallpaper mural depicting Michelangelo's Creation of Adam in a hallway ceiling. "I love being able to have the same look while staying within budget." For more wallpaper mural ideas, visit www.muralsyourway.com.

Mimicking the design techniques and selling features of a model home can help you maximize your enjoyment of your home as well as its resale value. ARA



Six Steps to Successful Outdoor Painting Projects

Home improvement tasks can be intimidating, and part of your to-do list most likely includes painting projects. As the weather begins to turn warmer outside, outdoor painting projects become key. But don't let these tasks take up too much of your valuable time. There are many tips and tools for quick and easy painting projects with fun, surprising results.

Step 1:

Look outside and see what needs painting. Because the rough winter months can take their toll, look again at items that might have been fine last summer. Obviously the deck is one of the main potential painting projects in the yard, but don't forget about things like housing trim, shutters, the fence, sheds, furniture, children's toys, lattice, grills, play equipment and even the mailbox.

Step 2

Make sure to properly prepare the item that needs repainting. By sanding and prepping before painting you can ensure higher quality results and a longer lasting paint job. First, remove the paint. Whether it is wood, brick, or other materials, sand to expose the natural material under the paint. Many tools are available to ease this job, like the Wagner PaintEater. This electric tool is easy to use and removes peeling paint from siding

and trim, as well as concrete block, steel and masonry, making it a handy tool for outside.

Step 3

After prepping the project it's time to decide on paint. When looking at paint or stain make sure that you find one that is made especially for outdoors. This type of paint will last longer under more severe conditions and resist blistering, cracking and peeling. Also look for products with special outdoor properties such as resistance to fading. Consider buying a sealant or top coat for extra protection from the elements of Mother Nature.

Step 4

Decide on color and design. Just because it's outside doesn't mean that you have to stick to the popular browns and tans, although natural colors are usually the ones that blend best with yard decor. Interesting colors can add style and personality to your yard. For example, soft pastels for lawn furniture will match with many of the flowers typically found in the garden. Try looking at the color of your house and tie in this color with other parts of your yard, such as your shed or dog house. Also, textural paints can add an interesting element to your outdoor oasis.

Step 5

You've prepped, decided on design and bought quality outdoor paint. Now is the time to put all these elements together. Be sure to read through the recommended directions for the products you purchased as some can vary. If you purchased a top coat or sealant, apply as needed. Decide what application process works best for you. Some prefer using a brush while others prefer a sprayer such as the Wagner Control Spray tool. This sprayer is great for outdoor projects because its variable flow trigger is easy to use and with three spray patterns, you're sure to get great coverage.

Step 6

Allow proper time to dry. Some products might require that the first coat dry overnight before another is applied. Proper application will equate to a better finished product and sometimes years more before you have to repaint again. Once fully dry, you're free to enjoy.

Don't put off painting projects, they can be quicker and easier than you think. And once you're done you have a yard you can enjoy and show off to your friends. Wagner painting tools are available at large home retail stores. ARA



How to Paint Like a Pro

You're standing in the aisle at your local paint dealer or hardware store trying to decide which brand of paint to buy for your living room remodel. Naturally, you want to save money, so you gravitate towards the less costly product.

What could possibly be the difference between the cheaper paint and the more expensive brand? Paint is paint right? Wrong. Before you cut corners with your paint, as well as painting tools, you might want to think twice. Trying to save a few dollars in this area could prove to be a costly mistake.

Painting is one of the least expensive and most popular ways to change the look of almost any room in your home. For less than \$200 and a few hours, you can easily transform a kitchen, bathroom or bedroom from drab to dramatic. So why scrimp on what you're going to be looking at for years to come?

Economy paints and painting tools may have an attractive price, but higher-quality paints and products are formulated and manufactured to produce the best results. Even though superior paints may cost a few more dollars, the benefits they provide over budget paints can be numerous. For starters, compared with ordinary paints, top quality finishes are much easier to work with and offer superior long-term performances.

Not All Paints Are Created Equal

Before you begin your project, how can you determine if paint is premium, other than by its price? All paints, oil based and latex, are made of four main components: water, binder, pigment and additives. When purchasing paint, it's important to look at these key ingredients to determine if you are getting your money's worth.

As far as top quality paints are concerned; less is more when it comes to liquid. A can of quality paint should contain a high volume of solids (pigment and binder), approximately 35 to 45 percent, and less liquid than ordinary paint. Economy paints are usually made up of only 25 percent solids. Paints with less water and a higher solid content are more durable and resist stains and dirt much better than those that contain fewer solids. And, even if they do get spotted or stained, walls can be washed off without damaging the finish. That means you'll have to repaint less frequently, which will ultimately save you money.

One of the more popular brands of these quality paints is Pratt & Lambert's new RedSeal Porcelain. A superior acrylic latex paint, it's infused with hard, ceramic molecules bonded together by a tough acrylic resin. The combination results in exceptional coverage and a barrier that most stains simply can't penetrate. Since stains lie on the surface, there's no scrubbing or burnishing of the surface. Stain removal is as easy as wiping stains off with a mild household cleaner or soap and water.

Is That Deal, Really A Deal?

If you're still hesitant to spend a few extra dollars on a higher-quality paint, consider the following: A superior paint may cost \$25, or more, per gallon while an economy brand is priced under \$20. However, by using a better quality paint, you'll need far less to complete a job. For example, you may have to use as many as three gallons of an economy paint to achieve the same results you would receive using just one or two gallons of high quality paint. The cheaper paint actually could end-up costing you more!

In addition to cost, by using economy paint, you'll spend an average of two additional hours on your painting project. Since you have to apply more coats of the cheaper paint, it will take more time. And if you're using a contractor, that means you'll have to pay him for the additional time. ARA



Small Fixes that Make a Big Difference in Your Home



One bold splash of color can warm up an entire room. One perfectly placed piece of art can brighten up an entire foyer. It's amazing the difference little changes can make. It's even more amazing when little changes pay you back -- big time! With a nip here and a tuck there, you can enjoy the comforts of your home with some extra cha-ching in your wallet.

Replace incandescent bulbs with fluorescent.

One small step for the homeowner, one big step for the environment. These spiral-shaped eco-friendly wonders not only cut down on carbon dioxide emissions, but they are also great little time and money savers. Although the bulb itself is more expensive, it uses about one-fourth of the energy to put out the same amount of light and lasts a lot longer.

In turn, you don't have to replace bulbs every time you turn around and you're actually happy to open the power bill when it shows up in your mailbox.

Put some mats outside your doors.

Okay, okay, so it may not net you that big of a bottom line, but if you consider that time is money, then it's a no-fail scheme to get-rich-quick. You can easily cut your cleaning time in half if you take simple measures to keep dirt out in the first place. Choose some big mats that will do their duty to scrape the dirt off of shoes before those shoes go traipsing throughout your home.

The ones made out of plastic grass are perfect (fake daisy, optional).



Install some weather stripping.

Seal that crack; get money back! Many doors and windows have little cracks that your regular Joe, or Joanne, overlooks. Unfortunately, dollars and cents are leaking out every time you heat or cool your home. Installing weather stripping, which is a flexible sealer around the moving parts of doors and windows, is an easy weekend task and it saves a bundle in energy costs.

Use timers.

In just a few minutes you can install some timers around your house and save money on energy costs. There's really no need to keep the lights on or the stereo playing when you are away (unless Fluffy thinks otherwise), so plug them into timers and set them to turn on and off when you will be using them. Putting the lights and television on a timer is also a good reminder of when it's time to turn in at the end of the day.

Set your thermostat.

It's got to be the easiest and most effective way to cut energy costs, but sometimes, the most neglected. You can save about three percent of your heating costs for every degree you lower your thermostat during the winter and about six percent for every degree you raise your thermostat during the summer. It's especially helpful if you get a thermostat that you can program and then put it out of your mind. Several thermostats by American Standard offer energy-savings modes that can automatically adjust your thermostat to save you money.

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Clean your air.

Installing a whole house air filtration system, such as American Standard AccuClean, in your home may not be a bad investment. When you consider that you don't have to buy those ineffective disposable air filters anymore, the savings can sure add up. It's also a big time saver because you don't have to dust and clean nearly as often. After all, if it's not in the air, it's not going to be on your furniture. But the greatest benefit of all is not breathing in air full of contaminants, such as pollen, dust, dander and other unmentionables.



Adding style and flexibility to your landscaping

Many homeowners desire the high-end look of stone for their walkways, patios and driveways, but at more modest concrete prices. One way to do this is with interlocking concrete pavers—a pavement type that continues to grow in popularity throughout Canada and the United States. Interlocking concrete pavers use high-strength, durable concrete units that interlock together to form a patterned surface which can be put into service immediately.

Pavers are manufactured in various shapes, textures and colours. An important benefit of pavers is they can be removed and reinstalled. They are used in walkways, patios, driveways, plazas and in downtown renovations. Concrete pavers are available in a wide range of styles. Paver units are often used in restoration projects, such as parks and streets in historic areas. Since paver units are uniform in size, they offer a smoother ride and are easier to repair than their historic cobblestone counterparts.

The ability to produce pavers in a wide variety of shapes and colours makes it possible to use them in attention-grabbing ways that add to the character of a home or city. Cities and municipalities use concrete pavers to create dramatic streetscapes, plazas and urban parks.

Learn more about using concrete pavers in a patio, walkway or driveway online at icpi.org. N/C