

Fabulous FURNITURE

Flooring choices add vibrancy

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When homeowners want to truly add dynamic looks to their home, they often look down at the floor.

Flooring options remain as varied as homes themselves, especially in the kitchen where wood, ceramic tile and laminates can be used. In the dining room wood and carpet remain popular.

The dining rooms is one of those rooms that can stand out in a home, says Mike Riley, owner of Dalley Carpet stores in Livonia and Canton.

"The dining room, along with the bathroom, are places where people can get a little more daring with colors," said Riley. "It's not uncommon for homeowners to use dark green, dark red and dark blue on the wall, so they use colors in the carpet to match."

Textures are used often to conceal footprints, Riley said. Borders also are used in a formal setting, said Riley. "They might have a floral print in the center, then a solid color on the border," Riley said.

Luanne Acevedo, a sales representative at the Tile Shop in Farmington Hills, said her company sells a lot of a natural stone tile for dinettes and kitchens, and it's even used in the dining room.

"We're seeing a lot of limestone, used with a little bit of marble and granite," Acevedo said. "It's very popular, because of its natural look. It's kind of rustic looking and very elegant."

Some limestone features traces of fossils and shells in the rocks.

Kitchens

Customers also prefer the neutral tones in the kitchen and porcelain tiles, said Acevedo.

"Porcelain is more durable and flexible than ceramic," Acevedo said. "When ceramic tiles chip, you will see a red clay color. When porcelain chips, you will see the (tile's) same color."

Homeowners also place the tiles in a diagonal pattern for a change of pace, and often the floor contains granite and marble tiles for a change of pace, Acevedo said.

Popular porcelain tiles are the Pietra D'oro, a grayish, natural toned tile; the Cairo Porcelain, containing pink and rose tones; and the Basaltite Bianca, which has a rough finish with white tones and neutral colors, Acevedo said.

Hardwoods, laminates, vinyl sheet goods and even cork are popular in the kitchen and dinette areas, Riley said.

"The gloss level of the vinyl looks better than it did at one time," said Riley. "Now they're making vinyl look like ceramic tile and hardwood. The vinyls made by Armstrong and Congoleum now have a natural stain and natural tile look."

Laminate is popular because you can wet mop the floor. "You can't wet mop hardwood, and they have a look of ceramic or wood," Riley said.

Laminate floor is comprised of an inner core and an outer layer of wood or plastic veneer that can simulate wood, marble or granite.

Gray and terra cotta are popular laminate colors, Riley said. Engineered hardwoods are different from the 3/4-inch hardwoods. "When you put in the 3/4 inch wood, it's difficult to pull out your dishwasher to service it," Riley said. "Engineered floors are not as thick."

Floors are pre-finished, but customers can order it unfinished.

"Finishes contain aluminum oxide, which makes a very hard finish on the floor," said Riley. "That's where they are going with finishes, performance and durability."

Choices run the gamut with maple, oak, ash and hickory.

With ceramic tile, customers want the larger tiles of 12-by-12-inch and 24-by-24-inch. "The look is more natural and you have less grout. With a bigger tile, you have less grout and less maintenance," Riley said.

Then there's cork floors, comparable in price to ceramic tiles. "Cork floors are extremely durable, they are more forgiving and easier on your legs," Riley said.

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Of course, you can take a walk on the wild side with exotic hardwoods. Oak and maple remain the most popular domestic choices for wood floors, according to Cole Martin, president of BeaverHome.com, but there is great interest in the new exotics from South America. BeaverHome.com offers hardwood flooring online. That Web site works with a Brazilian company that is in complete compliance with the principles and criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council to help protect reforestation of native Brazilian trees.

"Jatoba is the russet color of autumn leaves, while Macaranduba is somewhat darker," Martin said. Jatoba is a Brazilian cherry, while Macaranduba is also known as Ironwood.

"Both are three times harder than oak, so you can imagine how durable and low-maintenance they are. But above all, they are beautiful and romantic."

Tere Bresin, a New Jersey designer, said hardwood flooring has skyrocketed in popularity since the early 1990s.

"Hardwood floors are classic and classy. They are clean looking, natural and warm, and they suit every decor. They are also easy care, and doctors may recommend them because they don't trap animal dander, dust, pollen and other allergens. Since some 60 million Americans suffer from allergies today, that's important."

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ized by a more handcrafted look than contemporary. Woods are stained, with a matte finish. The stain gives a softer look, especially when a special brush is used to add black dots, adding a "distressed" look, to make the furniture seem older and mellow.

"Most of my clients are referrals," says Morganroth. "They've seen my work in friends' homes, and they liked what they saw."

"When they come to the studio, I ask them what they liked and didn't like about the house they had seen. I also visit their house and we chat about their lifestyle. Then we walk through the studio and they tell me what pieces they like, and which they don't like. Invariably, they will pick a certain style."

"Based on what they tell me and what I've observed, I'll put together a design scheme. Sometimes a client will tweak it a little, but they almost always accept the overall scheme."

Bill Wolf, CEO of Newton Furniture in Livonia, has observed that his clients are getting away from super casual and veering towards transitional, a combination of traditional and country.

"Once, nobody would have dreamed of putting an heirloom table next to a modern sofa," says Wolf. "But if the pieces are of good design, it's ideal for a lived-in look. Country is coming back, but it's not as 'precious' as it was in an earlier incarnation. It has a more handcrafted look than other styles."

American country is characterized by simple and honest lines, made of woods like pine, maple and oak. Look for Windsor chairs, hutches, pedestal or trestle tables. Sofas and chairs are high backed with ruffled skirts. Rustic country is more

rough-hewn and basic: the hunting lodge look, or southwestern or Mexican designs are examples.

European country styles were often adaptations of sophisticated urban or court furniture adapted to country living. Styles vary from the painted light woods of Swedish country to the warm wood tones of Provence, Italy, or England.

Like Shakespeare, Wayne Bondi, staff interior designer at German's Fine Furniture, Troy, refers to the ages of man, winnowing the Bard's seven to three. "Young people want the 'look.' Comfort means nothing: They'll sit on boards of they perceive it's in. Their look is contemporary, period. Sleek, leather, no frills for this group."

"Young families want furniture that's indestructible and dirtproof. Comfort is nice, but it's a bonus. They want something that will last practically forever, or until the youngest goes to college. A favorite piece for this group is the 'chair and a half.' Under 60 inches, it's just the right size for a mother and small child."

"Finally, the kids are gone, and comfort is the main thing. Warm traditional is popular with this group. A clear line sofa, not too bulky, with a damask or woven cover. Often, they'll finish the new decor with an ornate accent piece, such as a large gilded mirror with carved pediments in the Italian Renaissance style. I think it's a reaction to the first two stages of their lives."

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