

Full color

Bolder looks on home fronts

Exterior colors don't dart in and out of fashion like those on the inside, but there's definitely something new in the way homeowners are mixing paint for their homes. The key word is more — more color and more adventurous combinations.

"It used to be that an exterior color scheme was two colors: a body color and a trim," says Patricia Veroldi, president of Color Marketing Group, an association that forecasts color trends. "Then we started seeing people using three colors and now it's four."

"If there are 20 houses on the street that look just like yours," says Veroldi, "you can set yourself apart by tasteful use of color. You want to be unusual without being outlandish, different without being garish."

Even a color novice can put together a distinctive color scheme. To avoid a garish look, remember that a livelier palette doesn't necessarily mean a brighter one.

"Neutrals will always be the heart of the palette for the exterior," she says, "because direct sunlight has the obvious effect of making colors look brighter." Even accent colors need to be slightly muted so they don't become neon when the sun shines.

Louis Aubert, a New Orleans designer and colorist and a member of the American Society of Interior Designers, who describes himself as "a rabid color fan," has made a specialty of helping homeowners become more adventurous with color. He agrees homeowners are getting bolder with their use of exterior colors.

"People are becoming much more aware of their homes, and they are beginning to embrace color," says Aubert. "In older neighborhoods, especially in the inner city, it's a badge of honor to paint your home with several colors. It shows your commitment to your home."

If you're interested in trying out new colors for your home, Aubert shares advice on how to get started.

"Look at your house objectively," he says. "What are its best features and its worst features?"

Too many homeowners, he says, accent mechanical features such as rain gutters and downspouts. "Those are things you want to lose," he says. Gutters, service entries, even an unattractive garage door will seem to disappear if you paint them the same background color as the house.

On the other hand, attractive details — like nice moldings over the window — will come alive if you paint them a contrasting color, even if the contrast is subdued.

Before choosing colors, Aubert suggests that you study photos of your house from all sides, including detail shots of the front door, dormer windows, gables and other special-interest areas.

"Photos make you focus," he says. "Look at them carefully. Look at the gables — exposed stone or brickwork and the colors in those materials."

It's a matter of personal preference, he says, whether you go for a monochromatic look, with subtle changes in color or high contrast. Both can be exciting. For example, on one shotgun-style cottage, Aubert achieved a subtle, playful effect with gray body color, white trim and shutters painted a grayed mauve. The porch decking was striped in two shades of gray with mauve undertones. On another small cottage of similar character, he went for a more high-energy scheme, contrasting pink body color against white trim and lavender and teal accents.

Aubert recommends painting samples directly on the house — not on plywood — and putting a patch on each side to see how it is affected by light from different directions.

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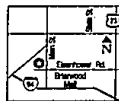
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Create the illusion of more space in your kitchen

If you would like to squeeze a little more living and working space out of your kitchen, here are some ideas from Country Kitchen Ideas magazine that may work:

■ Let your table do double duty as an island work surface and as a spot for eating.

■ A monochromatic color scheme makes a kitchen look bigger.

■ Keep the color palette light (pastels, ecru, and white) and limited (two or three tones). The space-expanding effect is enhanced if the cabinets, counters and walls are all the same color.

■ Direct the eye upward with vertical lines in the cabinets and wall treatments, or create interest on top of the cabinets. Vaulted ceilings also pull the eye upward.

■ Eliminate clutter from countertops, walls and floors. Select simple patterns for surface materials.

■ Use elements that make the most of space: window treatments that don't extend beyond the window frame, recessed lighting fixtures and appliances that align flush with cabinets.

■ Create an illusion of space with open shelves instead of upper cabinets or use glass-front doors. Be careful not to clutter these shelves.

■ Replace an interior wall with a peninsula and overhead cabinets. The peninsula adds storage and counter space, plus it opens up the room.

■ Annex nearby space gone to waste. A pantry can fit inside a cleaning closet. An appliance niche can bump out into an attached garage.

■ Reflective surfaces, such as metal and mirrors, make a space seem larger.

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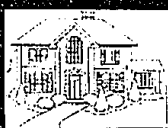
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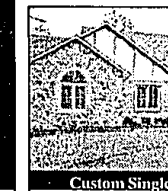
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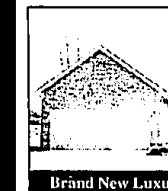
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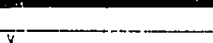


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