

# Design Trends

THIS YEAR'S HOTTEST STYLES IN HOME FASHION AND DECOR

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## SUMMARY - Design Trends

Environmental awareness has made its way into the home and appears to be the hottest trend. Colors reflective of nature, such as varying shades of green, are being used as a base to create an earth-conscious ambiance.

Natural elements are added to bring a bit of nature indoors, including rough-hewn woods, metals, stones, and unbleached or undyed textiles. These can be seen in flooring made from natural materials such as bamboo, wide wood planks, stone, marble, or granite. Bamboo plants or other natural foliage are popular, as are chunky weaves and natural fabrics.

Metal is also highly popular, and the more traditional chromes and stainless steel have been warmed up with the addition of brushed nickel or aluminum, bronze, copper, and nickel. Hammered metals add an ethnic flare to home design, which ushers in yet another popular trend this year.

Multicultural influences abound, highlighted by the Beijing Olympics this summer. Reds, oranges, jades, and yellows are a canvas for floral designs, origami folds, and silky fabrics associated with the Asian influence. Moroccan styling is also highly popular, with the deep reds and purples and multi-textured décor bringing culture into home design.

Hollywood glamour reminiscent of the 1930's and 1940's has come back en vogue, but toned down to maintain a sense of comfort and warmth. Luxe decorating pieces, such as crystal chandeliers or lamps, are used sparingly, combined with comfortable furnishings and subdued colors. No longer should glamorous surroundings be considered ultra-formal, stuffy, or uncomfortable. Opulence has gained a bit of humility.

Once considered moody and dark, purple has stormed as one of the hot design colors of the year. It began its run in fashion, which quickly carried over into the home. Lighter shades of iris and lavender are used in place of traditional neutrals to add softness and warmth to modern spaces. Deep purple, eggplant, and aubergine create a sultry, exotic environment for living spaces.

Color has made a splash, and almost every hue of the rainbow is included. Rich jewel tones such as deep reds, bright oranges, warm yellows, and turquoise have gained popularity. The only limitation is the imagination, as these colors are used for everything from eye-popping backdrops to room brightening accent pieces.

Black and white continues to remain popular, with lots of textured textiles to help soften the look. Bits of color such as red or pink are added to give a touch of surprise and energy, as well

as to create the illusion of a larger space. Subdued animal prints are being combined with glass and metal against the black and white backdrop.

There has been a movement in home design to reflect a return to family roots, almost as if longing for a slower pace. As a respite from the hectic nature of everyday life, home design has included crewel colors that remind us of colorful needlepoint, homemade cooking, and warm family memories. Pumpkin colors, browns, burgundies, deep reds, and forest greens create an inviting atmosphere that encourages gatherings with family and friends. Second hand antiques and other comfortable furnishings complete the look.

In every popular design trend, elements of the earth are included. Whether it is the use of recycled materials, natural flooring, undyed materials, or rough woods, the theme this year that carries through every popular trend is the prominence of nature moving from the outdoors into the home. The increased awareness of environmental issues makes this trend one we are likely to see continued well into the future.

## OVERVIEW

The design trends have gone eco-friendly, incorporating natural textures with rich, earthy colors to reflect a renewed environmental consciousness. No longer are earth tones bland and boring. The vivid new style for environmentally aware décor incorporates greens, clear blues, soft pinks, and rich sunset colors.

The varying tones of the earth as the sun passes overhead, marking various points in the day, are reflected in the home through fusions of colors, taking a room from the brisk softness of dawn through the bright warmth of afternoon and into the sultry glow of sunset.

Personal style will largely guide color choices for home decorating this year; look for bolder backdrops as homeowners become more accustomed to creating a living environment rather than just a look. “Consumer’s increasing color confidence and personal style make any color fashionable,” says Debbie Zimmer, a paint and color expert with The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute.<sup>1</sup>

Accent pieces that reflect relationships with the earth blend well with the backdrop of fern, sage, or golden yellow. Rough, natural woods, bamboo, stones, cotton and jute combine with natural, undyed materials in tones of ecru, sand, and adobe to bring the outdoors inside and reflect a newfound harmony with nature.

Sophistication has gone subtle with clear blues and aqua’s accented with crystal chandeliers and glass accents. The key to elegance this year is understated refinement, adding whispers of luxury and elegance to soft hues that conjure images of cool water and warm beaches.

Purple has taken its place this year as a bold statement of sophistication. Combined with tones of silver and grey, the boldness of plums and purples contrast to the understated pastels of last year.

Home décor has taken a turn for the exotic, with the Olympics in China bringing out rich shades of jade, bold reds, and warm oranges and yellows. The trend is to include touches of ethnic color, surprisingly combined with rich chocolate browns as neutrals. Dress these bold looks up with handcrafted accent pieces from Japan, Morocco, and Asia.

Black and white brings a modern look into the year, but punched up with bold reds or surprisingly subtle pinks and lavenders. Brushed metals remain popular, but softer tones of copper and bronze will outshine chrome and stainless steel.

Furniture ranges from see-through structures of molded plastics, cantilevered seating, and high tech metals to oversized lamps, chandeliers, mirrors, and other decorative accessories.

## GOING “GREEN” WITH HOME DÉCOR

The trend is recognition of Earth consciousness, and concern for environmental issues is reflected in this year’s home decorating choices. The colors of the outdoors have been brought inside to create surroundings that mimic and blend with nature.

Green is the new “neutral,” in shades of fern, pine, sage, and palm. These colors are used as a backdrop to create rooms that are warm and inviting with an earthy, eco-friendly feel. More traditional neutrals such as sand, tan, warm brown, and beige become accent colors to complete the look.

In recognition that nature is more than greens, browns, and neutrals, other shades that reflect our natural surroundings are reflected in home décor as well. Stone tones, vivid sunrise colors such as pinks, oranges, and yellows, and all shades of white are being combined to create a color palette as varied and unique as the world around us.

Aqua, turquoise, and clear blues bring the element of water indoors. The colors are soft and flowing, reflective of the sky and the purity of Earth’s most important element.

The warmth and softness of earth tones makes them suitable for use in any room, but they are particularly well suited for kitchens, bathrooms, and family living spaces.

Bamboo appears in the home as a choice for eco-friendly flooring, or as a popular accent item. Fresh bamboo plants can dress up a windowsill or a corner of your living space, reflecting yet another element of nature inside the home.

Natural wood, soft leather, and undyed, unbleached chunky weaves complete with imperfections finish off the natural look. Designs at the biannual Paris-based tradeshow, Maison & Objet, included floral patterns on all types of fabrics accented with bronze, platinum, and gold.<sup>ii</sup>

Other earth-friendly design elements popular in this realm of home décor include reclaimed wood, organic fibers, recycled plastics, raffia, heavy wools, and organic cottons.

Textured painting that resembles marbling gives walls a more natural appearance, and natural flooring materials are making their way out of bathrooms and kitchens and into the rest of the home. These include slate, stone, cork, bamboo, granite, and marble. Hardwood floors are leaning towards wider planks with a hand-scraped or weathered look.

All of nature’s colors are fashionable this year, and there is no doubt the natural look has gone from dowdy to downright tantalizing.

## ASIAN INFLUENCE

As China hosts the Olympics this year, designers expect to see warm colors in surprising combinations, such as rich reds blended with coppers, burnished oranges, and browns.<sup>iii</sup> Vibrant colors such as magenta, pumpkin orange, peacock blue, turquoise, and royal blues will find use both as highlight colors and as bold backdrops.

The Asian influence will also highlight jades, yellows, and reds against backdrops of nature-inspired natural hues, making these vivid colors really pop.

Painted stripes of the same shade, but in different sheens, add a burst of life to a neutral wall. Global textiles, including satins and silks, are being added to natural cottons, which not only giving an ethnic feel to a room, but the depth of various textures fits right in with this year's decorating trends.

Neutral colored flooring, such as natural stone, provides the perfect complement to the jewel tones found in Asian inspired design, and stripes and florals make an appearance in furnishing textiles. Red or orange accent pillows can be used to punch up more neutral-colored furnishings.

Plants, water, and stones are the three primary components of Asian design, continuing the theme of incorporating nature into this year's top decorating trends.

Smooth stones in a clear, glass vase, or used around the base of decorative plants or candles, brings nature indoors. Painted inspirational words on a few stones highlighted against a black background is another way to add harmony and natural elements.

Water is an important element in Asian design, and the addition of a small fountain to a room creates a sense of tranquility. Indoor waterfalls should have an appealing sound as well as a beautiful cascade.

Plants add a touch of nature to the home, and bamboo and bonsai plants add a quintessential Asian flair. Bonsai are beautiful, but require special care and are best left for those with a green thumb, while bamboo is a relatively easy and carefree way to incorporate a bit of nature into living spaces.

Rice paper lamps and room dividers help pull together your other design elements to complete the look, and can be painted with beautiful floral designs.

## BLACK AND WHITE OPULENCE

The black and white combination is expected to gain popularity, creating a modern look that will highlight the high-tech finishes of furniture and accessories. This year, black and white has become the backdrop for glamorous living spaces, such as living rooms and bedrooms.

Add subdued animal prints, such as cheetah or zebra, glass, polished metals, and high sheen finishes, as well as contrasting textures to really create an air of opulence. Punch up the look with splashes of bold color such as rich red, or soften the look by adding brush strokes of taupe, soft pink, or deep lavender. The hints of color freshen up the black and white look and keep it up to date. The addition of splashes of color in a black and white room not only adds an element of surprise, but pulls the room back and opens it up to make it appear larger.

Floating objects add a contemporary flair, such as plinth base furniture and cantilever chairs. They add an airiness that allows you to see through the furniture while maintaining an ultra-modern look. Floating objects such as sphere lamps hung at varying heights and furnishings made from recycled metals and plastics continue the theme.

Black and white is a great way to highlight natural design elements such as stone, or to incorporate silk wallpapers and sleek metals. In order to get the most out of black and white design, care should be taken to incorporate a variety of textures.

The hot metals of the season look great against a backdrop of black and white and incorporate the appeal of natural elements. Brushed metals have eclipsed chrome and stainless in popularity this year, but all types of metals remain a hot decorating trend.

## PURPLE'S NEW SOPHISTICATION

One of the hottest new looks this year is the presence of purple intermingled with metallic accents. In contrast to the pastels that normally rule springtime, purple gives the season a sultry tone, yet maintains an air of elegance. Out of style for quite some time, purple highlighted with grey remind us of a bygone era and have come back into popularity with force.

Once thought of as a popular color for little girls and teenagers, purple has grown up and is being used to transform a variety of adult spaces, including kitchens, bedrooms, and living rooms.

The focus on ethnic diversity and the acceptance of multicultural influences has help propel purple to renewed popularity in all of its hues. Even though purple is almost never used in Asian interiors, today's trend of blending the unexpected allows purple to be used as a dramatic pairing to highlight Asian-styled furnishings. The combination of rich purples and warm browns creates a space that is inviting and comfortable.

Purple can evoke a number of images and feelings, from Old World charm reminiscent of royalty, to sultry and sexy, to fresh and youthful.

Unusual combinations, such as orchid and lilac, will be seen matched up with yellows, golds, and greens, continuing the theme of Earth awareness while maintaining a certain amount of elegance.

As the year progresses, purple becomes increasingly popular. Lavender, iris, and heather colored walls serve as a backdrop to highlight plum, eggplant, or aubergine furnishings accented with silver or grey.

A pale shade of lavender paired with grey concrete or stone flooring adds sophistication and warmth to modern kitchens. It softens a look filled with stainless steel appliances and countertops, bringing the industrial look into the home, while keeping it friendly and appealing.

The metals of the season can be showcased against a backdrop of purple and grey, including silver, brushed nickel, pewter, platinum, steel, and aluminum. With the popularity of so many metallic finishes, the richness of purple adds depth and warmth as well as sophistication.

Purples are making an increasingly more prevalent showing in home decorating media, including the latest edition of Elle Décor and fashion press releases. The Pantone Color Institute has even chosen a shade of purple called Blue Iris as the Color of the Year.<sup>iv</sup>

## THE ETHNIC CONNECTION

Colors and textures reminiscent of India, Morocco, and Latin America are in this year, and will be making their way into restaurants, hotels, and retail shops, as well as homes. Ethnic flavor is a driving force in design, and can be accomplished easily by adding a few accent pieces, such as lamps, pillows, or rugs for a splash of culture.

The Moroccan connection brings deep reds and glowing oranges as a backdrop for hand crafted leather, colorful blown glass, and perforated metal work. Latin America gives us golden yellows, turquoise, and dusty rose combined with color-rich woven textiles. The colors of Latin America are as rich and vibrant as the people who live there.

Davis Remignanti, a lead design consultant for Furniture.com, describes this year's accent colors as "spice infused," including russet, acid green, flax, and carnelian combined with chrome and glass.<sup>v</sup>

India, described as "the land of color," will showcase orange combined with yellows and greens, much like the colors one would expect to find in a bowl of fruit. Indian colors are vibrant and festive.

## UNDERSTATED HOLLYWOOD GLAM

The Hollywood glamour of the 1930's and 1940's is alive and well, with a few updates to keep with current trends. Vintage glamour included crystal, gold, and metallic paints. To achieve today's version of old Hollywood glamour, textured wallpaper infused with metallic threads and gilded mirrors have achieved popularity. Crystal lamps or chandeliers add elegance and style to muted backdrops. Gray-blue is a popular base color against which to highlight a few more elaborate design elements.

A few luxurious touches set against understated tones go a long ways towards creating a look that rekindles the spirit of Hollywood's heyday, yet keep the spaces comfortable. Too much looks gaudy, so the key is to keep it subtle. Dining rooms and living rooms are particularly well suited to this look.

A classic example is the dining room with soft blue walls and contrasting blue table linens and upholstery. A crystal chandelier adds elegance, and a rich antique sideboard gives the space warmth. An ornate gilded mirror pulls the look together, and the use of muted colors prevents the look from becoming overwhelming.

Bringing Hollywood glam into the living room is more about adding an unexpected accent wall, or using cushions and accent rugs to update the room. Gold, crystal, or metallic finishes added to an inviting and comfortable room add depth and elegance without overdoing it.

When creating luxurious surroundings, this year's trend is to keep them warm and inviting, making the richness of the décor understated. This new combination of luxury with natural living has been dubbed "casual luxe," making the surroundings calming and inviting, rather than creating the stiffness of more formal spaces.

## COZY COMFORTS

Vibrant, colorful rooms with overstuffed furniture or stately antiques that create an atmosphere of warmth and comfort are definitely in this year. Those who have always preferred comfort over style will be able to keep up with the "in" crowd this year, as relaxation and warmth are in, and stuffy, formal styles are out.

Crewel colors, such as those found in rich embroideries, are the hues of the season. They remind us of slower, gentler lives and create a feeling of security and stability. Cranberry reds, pumpkin orange, and warm brown harken memories of home cooking and family gatherings.

Knitted or crocheted afghans, rugs, blankets, or throws add to the feeling of home and compliment the richness of colors perfectly. To keep the feeling warm and inviting for friends and family to relax and enjoy each others' company, yet keep the look fresh and modern, unique pairings of colors such as earthy browns or deep plums combined with rose or bronze soothe and calm. A splash of red, which is warm yet invigorating, can be used for an added surprise of color.

For the best results, neutral colored upholsteries offset bolder colored fixtures, accessories, and wall coverings. The new neutrals add varying shades of green to camel, taupe, and mocha. These colors are reflective of nature, carrying over the theme of ecologically minded home décor into other realms. Colors that evoke images of rock, stone, and soil are expected to remain trendy throughout the year.<sup>vi</sup>

The return to colors associated with home and hearth help to satisfy the soul and nurture the spirit. They reflect the growing desire to enjoy a life that is less complicated and hectic, and more grounded.

## THE NEW NEUTRALS

Today's neutrals are anything but noncommittal. Varying shades of green combine with rich medium to dark browns, creating warmth that is perfect for living spaces such as bedrooms and living rooms. These colors reflect the new awareness of earth issues that has found its way into home décor, as well as provide nurturing for weary, overworked souls.

Neutrals in home design will continue to include beiges, browns, taupes, and tans that reflect earth elements such as rock, soil, and stone.

Shades of sage, palm, and fern are being used on walls to bring a sense of calmness and nature into a room, combined with rich furnishings in dark wood and leather. Natural flooring, especially hardwoods, and colorful accent pieces create a comfortable haven from which to escape the stresses of the world. Other earthy tones such as grey-blues, whisper pink, and soft coral can also be considered part of this shift in thinking.

No longer are neutrals equivalent to blandness or frumpiness. Today's neutrals include an entire palette of warm and soothing shades upon which to paint the canvas of the ideal home sanctuary. Some of these new neutrals are even surprising in their boldness, even though they remain soft.

## WARMER METALLICS

The use of metals is hot this year, and chrome and stainless steel are still being used heavily in home design. They are joined by a variety of new looks, including gray toned metals such as silver, pewter, charcoal, platinum, steel, aluminum, and brushed nickel.

Bronze and copper toned metals have begun a dramatic upswing in popularity, including brushed or oiled finished and hammered metal accents. Metals can add a touch of ethnicity to home décor, while bringing an element of nature into any room. From ultra-modern stainless steel and chrome combined with glass, to warmer coppers and bronzes blended with neutral or spicy colors, metals will remain hot throughout the year.

## FENG SHUI FOR THE HOME

Feng shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement, literally translates to “wind and water.” It is yet another in the earth-conscious decorating trends popular, bringing both ethnic influences and an awareness of the environment into the home. The goal is to create an environment that fosters health, happiness, and wealth. On its most basic level, the art of feng shui is based on the premise that surroundings affect life’s circumstances.

Earth elements that comprise feng shui – earth, fire, wood, metal, and water – reflect the same elements seen in other design trends this year. Feng shui takes those elements in a room and balances them to enhance the flow of chi, or life energy, within the room.

Colors connected with feng shui are also those designed to increase peace and calmness, such as terra cotta, peach, tan, cocoa, coral, and cream. Soft pastels such as lavenders, light blues, and greens all fall in line with the colors that are hot. The use of these colors creates a tranquil, quiet atmosphere. The brighter and bolder colors of the spectrum, such as reds and oranges, are considered stimulating and should be used very sparingly with feng shui.

Design elements in feng shui call for soft lines and curvilinear shapes. Avoid hard corners, which are thought to cause negative energy; if you do have strong corners, drape a cascading linen over the piece to soften it.

In the bedroom, colors used to create an intimate atmosphere include pink, subtle red, burgundy, magenta, eggplant, or pomegranate.

Art and other decorative objects in feng shui should represent things one wants to see manifested in life. Mirrors should not be used as decorative items, as they are thought to interfere with rest and bounce too much energy around. The area should have access to plenty of natural light during the daytime, and offer complete darkness for sleep.

Other popular design elements that are not only part of decorating trends, but also fit nicely into feng shui, include pure cotton linens, luxe cashmere, or soft silks. A mixture of textures not only adds interest to the room, but it reflects yet another element of today’s design trends.

Wood – one of the key components of this year’s design trends – is another important addition with feng shui and represents strength, intuition, growth, and flexibility. Too much wood can be viewed as inflexible, though, leading to a lack of creativity and depression.

Flowers – either fresh or silk, natural fabrics and cotton, plants, and trees finish off a feng shui room with today’s design elements seamlessly integrated into the look and provide the softness and gentleness sought through feng shui décor.

## UPDATING OLDER HOME DÉCOR

Keeping with the theme of environmental awareness and the need to reuse and recycle whenever possible, the prevailing feelings in home décor are to keep current furnishings or major design pieces if possible, and bring them into the modern day by adding a few new elements. New furnishings are best if they come from recycled wood or plastic, or are vintage pieces rescued from estate sales or garage sales. The focus is not only on recycling as much as possible, but also on finding pieces that are multi-functional. Getting rid of furniture or other major decorating pieces is not considered part of the new, earth-friendly trend and is considered passé.

There is a recognition that the home should be comfortable and suit the style of the owner, making anything that the occupant enjoys stylish in its own right. Decorating trends offer the homeowner a wide variety, allowing for individual style and taste, rather than trying to force someone into a particular mold with regard to interior design.

Many of last year's popular trends have been carried over into this year, with updates in color accents to keep the look fresh. The prevalence of environmental consciousness dictates that the main pieces comprising older styles are kept and accented properly to bring them into the modern era. The goal is to eliminate as much waste as possible, while still creating a comfortable and stylish environment.

Earth consciousness has taken center stage, which is easy to incorporate into nearly any home design trend through the addition of natural elements. It seems that anything mimicking or reflecting nature can be tastefully incorporated to create a fresh, modern style. Items such as stone, granite, and marble that were traditionally reserved for kitchens and bathrooms are making their way into living rooms and bedrooms with great success. Colors previously used exclusively in bedrooms or for youth rooms are making their appearances in adult spaces, softening modern design elements, such as glass and metal, and creating an entirely new and refreshing look for the home.

Hollywood opulence has made a comeback, but subdued by gentle hues and understated elegance that creates a sense of tranquility and comfort. Gone are the days of gaudy room dressings and stuffy, uncomfortable furnishings. The value and beauty of antiques is recognized by combining these pieces with sparse luxury items, making glamour understated and elegant rather than pretentious and stuffy. Even in creating elegant surroundings, attention to comfort and the inclusion of earth elements is of utmost importance in carrying through this year's trends.

These designs are also becoming popular with hotels and business spaces, and will be making appearances in those areas with increasing prevalence. Boutique hotels are already incorporating many design elements, and many of these looks are reflected beautifully by them.

Awareness of earth issues and the need to acknowledge them in the home has led to decorating trends that are expected to continue throughout the year and into next, with deeper colors and bigger florals making an appearance toward year's end. The inclusion of earth-friendly colors, textures, and elements is expected to usher in a new era in home design that will maintain its popularity for years to come.

## SOURCES

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