

# What's hot for wall and floor coverings

By Karen Cooksey  
Copley News Service

For inexpensive decorating that adds pizzazz while camouflaging flaws, try decorating with pink. You husband can outline the edges with a brush while you follow along behind him with a paint roller, filling in the middle of the wall. If you're changing the color, using a can of basic flat latex paint that's easy to clean up with water, a couple working together can easily change the color of a room on a Saturday afternoon," says Julie Wyatt, ASID, an interior designer in Oklahoma City, Okla. (Ask your local paint or hardware store for advice on wall preparation and necessary supplies.)

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Another technique involves pulling color off the wall rather than painting it on.

For this process, the second coat of color is an overglaze that contains chemicals to keep it wet longer. So before the glaze dries, some of it is lifted off the wall with the tip of a dry paintbrush, a sponge, a bunched-up rag or even a turkey feather from a hobby shop, allowing the underlying shade to show through.

**FASHION UNDERFOOT**  
Whether you choose a soft, plush look or a polished, clean feeling, floor coverings set the tone for the rest of your decor. Your floors should be a feast for your soles as well as your eyes.

Before making flooring decisions, consider the following lifestyle questions:

• Will your investment in flooring be a stopgap measure for a rental in which you don't want to invest a fortune or a more long-term investment?

• Are you decorating a house you want to resell in a few years and looking for higher-quality floor coverings that you won't have to replace when you list the house?

• What decorating style are you developing? Will a plush, cozy carpet complement the high-tech glass-and-brass look you're aiming for? Would hardwood floors and throw rugs fit in best with your country furnishings?

• What areas of your home have traffic patterns that need a more durable floor?

• Have you thought about the feel of your feet on the floor? Do you like the sensation of soft carpeting under your toes when you step out of the shower, or will a bath mat on your sleek tile floor appeal more? Remember, while a hardwood floor is beautiful, it can be cold on morning feet.

Once you and your husband have put your heads together about the style and feel you want underfoot, consider the pros and cons of each option.

**CARPET**  
Wool has always been considered the optimum carpet fiber because it takes color so subtly and beautifully. However, recent advances allow nylon to simulate natural fiber, making it less expensive, more durable and easier to clean.

The more texture a carpet has, such as the bumpy Berber, the more contemporary the look. By contrast, smooth carpet surfaces like velvet pile are traditional.

If you don't plan on carpeting wall to wall, remember that remnants of pricey carpeting can be bound at the edges by your local carpet store and used as throw rugs, which can provide a warm spot on a hardwood kitchen floor or pull together a conversation area.

**VINYL FLOORING**  
Vinyl comes in single sheets or squares, which can be replaced if they tear or dent from heel marks. Most sheet vinyl is easy to clean and has a built-in gloss that requires no waxing.

Vinyl tile will have to be waxed. In either case, there are no grout lines to clean, but beware of pitted textures that trap dirt.

Vinyl flooring is almost unlimited in the range of design possibilities, from a chic black-and-white checkerboard to a charming faux brick.

**CERAMIC TILE**  
More costly than vinyl, ceramic tile does offer a rich look and a variety of designs, from classic to abstract.

When shopping for ceramic tile, be aware that if it is glazed, the color is painted on the tile and can chip off. Other tiles are the same color through and through and are more reluctant to show damage.



ALLS AND FLOORS - A creative floor, such as this one mixing wood and inlaid carpet designs, defines a room beautifully.

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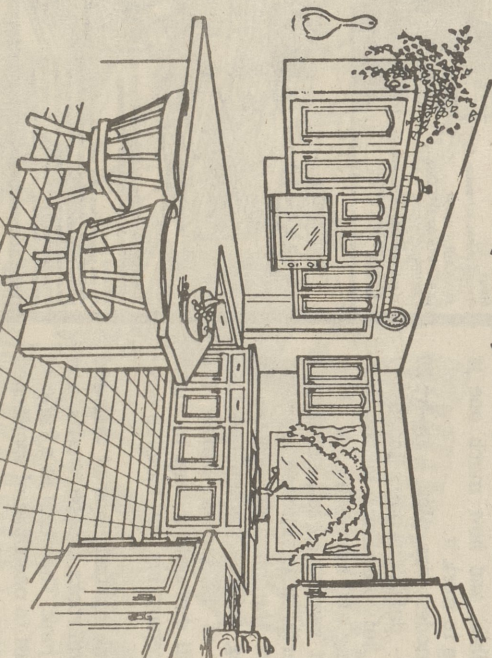
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# Style, design and renovation for the garden

By Debra Lee Baldwin  
Copley News Service

Would you like to transform your yard from yawn-inspiring to awe-inspiring?

The easiest way is to hire a landscape contractor. He or she will map out suggested improvements, recommend the right plants for your climate and implement everything from automatic irrigation to erosion control.

If you'd rather tackle the job yourself, the staff at a nursery or garden center can offer advice; there also are newly published books that can help.

A clever one by Joel M. Lerner, "The Complete Home Landscape Designer" (St. Martin's Press), covers everything from how to locate utility lines to selecting star-berry — plus pages of punch-out trees, shrubs, flowers and more to use in planning and improving your landscape.

Another guide, helpful for new as well as established yards, is "Landscape Design, Renovation and Maintenance," by Cass Turnbull (Betterway Publications).

In a chapter titled "What Makes a Yard Look Good or Bad," Turnbull offers the following advice: Just as with furniture and interior decorating, gardens have styles. Sometimes these can be blended, sometimes not.

Common garden styles include formal English (clipped hedges, roses, knot gardens), English cottage (fruit trees and lots of perennials rambling around in great profusion), Japanese (highly trained and maintained pines and other trees with masses of low sheared shrubs, placed rocks, and sand seas), early American (forsythias, quince, peonies, bearded iris), Pacific Northwest (rocks look like mountain outcroppings, rhododendron, pines, heather, vine maples, Douglas firs), woodland (tall trees with understory plants and ground covers), prairie (grasses and sun-loving wildflowers).

Take time to look in books and visit gardens to see what style you identify with most closely. You may be torn among several, but eventually your own style will assert itself.

Generally, you want your more intensive formal-looking areas, like roses and annual flower beds, closer to the house; then you can let the garden become more natural as you move farther away.

Is your yard on a slope? Remember, gravity always wins. Invest the time and money to fix your steep grades now; plant your garden later. Consider terracing, or rock and wall reinforcements.

Ideally, your yard should include truck access, or at least wheelchair access, and a hidden utility area. Also, be sure to plan your lawn so there is a minimum of objects to mow around.

You'll want shrubs and trees, plus grass, to soften the hard angular lines of your house. Some people eliminate grass altogether and use a patio surrounded by beds.

A few very tall things are essential to put your house in scale, but you don't want so many that they block all the light. Put a big tree on the south or west side to protect from the blazing sun and to provide a habitat for songbirds and other wildlife.

Carve out your beds in gentle sweeps around the yard's outside perimeter; make them three times as big as you think you should. The amount of grass you need is really quite small — enough for six chairs and a picnic table.

Take measures to avoid a spotily unplanned-looking yard. Plant in groups, never rows. Invariably, one of the plants in a row dies and is difficult to replace. Use groupings instead to give your yard a sense of being planned.

A sense of theme can be achieved by repeating a shrub or plant shape on different sides of an area, and by matching colors at bloom time.

An interesting yard has shows for every season. Spring bloomers include rhododendron, azalea, flowering ornamental dogwood, cherry, plum, crab apple — as well as deciduous flowering shrubs and flowering vines, such as clematis.

As spring turns to summer, you'll want some sweet-smellers to make lounging around outside appealing. There's usually a lull in midsummer, so you may wish to

add some annuals or perennials to keep things lively.

Choose some early fall bulbs and perennials to lead into the autumn show. Add some vines, trees and shrubs that turn colors or have interesting berries.

In deepest winter your yard's evergreen plants will keep the barren feeling away. Be sure to include plants with intriguing bark — such as London plane tree or red-twig dogwood.

Winter is when your hardscape shows up the most: the lines of your beds, the big rocks that you might put in for interest, and the shape, arrangement and texture of the stepping stones or paths.

People think flowers make a garden beautiful, but it's really contrast — in color (gray leaves next to purple leaves), form (round vs. columnar) and texture (soft or lacy next to spiky).

Plant things that are going to get tall in the back of the bed (or in the center of an island). Think in terms of "three stories." Trees make up the top story; under or in front of them are shrubs and under or in front of shrubs are ground covers.

Each area of your yard should have a focal point — perhaps an ornament or an interesting tree or shrub. It's a resting spot for your eyes so that the remainder of the yard seems to fit in. Don't have too many focal points in one area, though, as this defeats the purpose.



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