

HomeFront

DECOR & DESIGN — Decorex

The little room splashes out

The bathroom continues to be the home's ultimate cocooning spot, where we find quiet refuge from the outside world. Michelle Swart finds out more about the latest bathroom trends to be showcased at Decorex Cape Town



Pink bathrooms, once very popular in the 1950s and 1960s, are making a comeback. For a modern feel this bathroom, painted with Plascon Kitchens and Bathrooms mould-resistant paint in Rose Shadow, combines antiques, statement pieces and handmade objects with modern sanitaryware.

VISITORS to Decorex Cape Town, which runs until May 2 at the CTICC, will find that functionality combined with luxurious comfort and eco-awareness is still key to modern bathroom design, yet one of the most refreshing trends also making waves in bathrooms is the way that this functional space is being personalised. This is according to Decorex Cape Town show manager, Caïrey Slater.

"Now's the time to seek out statement pieces for the little room, such as a stunning antique cupboard, bespoke or interesting restored items. Grandma's old 'wastafeltjie' may well find its way into the modern bathroom."

Slater points out that the contrast of old and new is particularly strong in a functional space such as the bathroom, ensuring a modern look, as long as you don't start adding bric-a-brac.

Wood also makes its presence felt in a big way. Li Edelkoort has already predicted that wood is the number one material in the world of design — and the chalet-look will be popular. While we won't turn our bathrooms into saunas anytime soon, expect to see more use of wood — from water- and mould resistant flooring to wooden or wood-clad bathtubs and accessories, with the proviso that the products are eco-credible.

Launching their new Forest Autumn Collection at Decorex Cape Town is Forest Flooring. Included in this collection is a solid hardwood flooring on a clip-lock system that is completely water-proofed and able to take under-floor heating up to 28°C, making it ideal to bring the beauty of wood to the bathroom. According to William Combrinck, owner of Forest Flooring, wood ticks all the right boxes for application in the bathroom. "Wood feels so much



Walls painted a soothing blue in bacteria-resistant matte enamel, wooden floors and one-of-a-kind wooden accessories as well as an upcycled ottoman tub by Recreate and LIM mirror allow for a soulful home spa with personality. Pictures: SEAN CALITZ FOR PLASCON SPACES 4

warmer and softer underfoot than tiles. Aesthetically wood is also very pleasing, making it a timeless class that — with the right maintenance — will last for years."

The green revolution continues in the bathroom with modern, sustainable technology focusing on efficient use of energy and

water. Water-saving shower heads, low-consumption plumbing fixtures and well-placed, adjustable energy-friendly LED lighting lead the way.

There is a growing interest in grey water recovery, and for cisterns to be fed by recovered rainwater. The sustainable approach

also supports the use of recyclable material such as copper, steel, wood and ceramics. Countertops made from recycled glass also make their appearance.

The eco-caring bathroom welcomes innovations such as hydronic heated towel rails that do away with electrical heating elements. An example at the ON TAP stand is the Jeeves hydronic heated towel rails which use a simple circulation pump from the geyser or solar storage unit.

Another green tip comes from Darius Rhoda of Boutique Tiles who points out that acrylic baths retain water heat better than porcelain baths.

"Not only will less hot water be needed, saving water and electricity, but there will be less of a need to top up the water."

The experts foresee that bathrooms will continue to be mostly neutral whites and stone. Muted grey tones are also popular. The recession has made us pull in the reins and people tend to be more conservative in colour choices — opting for a safer, timeless look.

Surprisingly the colour green, which has been long maligned due to the avocado-green bathrooms of the 1960s and 1970s, is fast becoming a more desirable colour option for bathrooms. There's also a move back to bringing lush potted plants into the space, revving up the green.

Colour and personality are added with smalls, accessories, window treatments, art and a punch of colour with furniture, such as a purple upholstered ottoman. Other ways to add colour and playfulness in the bathroom include bright-coloured shower heads and even coloured LED lights that add atmosphere and drama to the shower.

Tiles are still extremely popular due to their practicality and

durability. While highly patterned tiles are not hot right now, Rhoda of Boutique Tiles point out that mosaic inlays can add artistic flair to the neutral palate of the modern bathroom environment.

Tiling does not have to be from floor to ceiling — leave certain areas untiled and give more space to paint. Paints such as Plascon Kitchens and Bathrooms water-based enamel with a matt finish are specially formulated to inhibit microbial growth. Look out for the latest on painted bathrooms in the edition of Plascon Spaces, available at the Plascon stand.

"Whether you want more masculine hues, the more delicate Rose Shadow or soothing blues for a spa-like feel, bathroom-friendly paints can transform a tired bathroom in a flash," says Anne Roselt, Plascon colour manager.

Another way to bring a personal touch to the bathroom is wall art with inspirational phrases, words or images emphasising the contemplative, serene mood of the bathroom, says Esther Schumacher of mywalltattoos.com, who will be launching their new Quotes range at the show.

Moisture-resistant wallpaper is also on the up and up, and so are antique-style mirrors used as an accent. Other trends pointing towards self-indulgence is the luxury of super-sized showers, dual basins and freestanding baths. Bronze, chrome and polished nickel faucets are on the increase, while the look of stainless steel is losing its shine.

Catch the latest bathroom design and technology trends at Decorex Cape Town's bathroom and fine finishes pavilions, with exhibitors such as Boutique Tiles, Classic Trading, Boutique Baths and Ceramic Lifes Tile. Visit www.decorx.co.za for details or online bookings.

DECOR & DESIGN - GARDENING

Simple and stylish

Alice Spenser-Higgs revises her opinion of low maintenance gardens



The curving pathway around the water feature leads the eye and gives the garden its wonderful sense of movement.

AS A gardener I tend to believe that low maintenance gardens are bland, unimaginative and static. I stand corrected, having seen a garden consisting almost exclusively of foliage plants yet is full of colour, texture, and movement that, most important of all, makes me wish that I owned it.

Talking to the designer, Craig de Necker, of The Friendly Plant, I realised that the success of a low maintenance garden depends on marrying strong design with the correct choice of plants. While this is true of garden design in general, knowing the characteristics and growth habit of plants is particularly critical for a garden that pretty much needs to look after itself.

As de Necker explains, "Many clients who want a low maintenance garden will ask for lollypops (clipped standards) or for plants like Duranta or Syzygium paniculatum that need to be rigorously trimmed and trained because by nature they are trees."

"The kind of plants that one needs are those that keep their structure and form without needing to be trimmed regularly and yet still look lush and appealing, especially if they are being used as a substitute for lawn."

The other misconception about low maintenance gardens is that paving is the easiest way to get rid of lawn with its hassle of weekly mowing and lawn mower maintenance.

That was the option that de Necker's client was considering, being at a loss for what to do with

the long, narrow space at the back of his home.

"I persuaded him that paving would be visually hard on the eyes and create an enormous amount of heat. I did not believe that paving would add value to his home in the same way that a planted garden would."

What the client wanted was a contemporary look with a minimalist feel and year-round colour without having the high maintenance that annuals would demand.

Describing this as one of his more difficult assignments because of the small, narrow space at his disposal, de Necker started by deciding what elements he wanted to include and then experimented with different options so that the design developed almost organically.

In all his gardens he likes to include features using water or fire because of the life that they bring into the garden, adding to its sensory richness.

In this garden, a stone edged pond with small fountain balances a small pool and open air seating area at the other end of the elongated space. A curving pathway of flagstones links the two areas, so that there is a sense of destination, which de Necker believes is important in every garden plan.

"Having a place to go in the garden gives one a feeling of ownership and there is a purpose for going into the garden and by walking through it one also experiences the garden, rather than just observing it," he says.

The most appealing aspects of the garden are the movement and texture of the swathes of ornamental grasses that echo the sinuous curves of the pathway as well as from the grass itself swaying in the breeze.

Tall growing Mondo grass borders the pathway, while dwarf Mondo grass is planted in-between the stepping stones.

A tip from de Necker is to remember that Mondo grass is not uniform, but varies in height. When using it between stepping stones always opt for the dwarf Mondo that does not grow higher than 10cm to 15cm.

In contrast to the dark green Mondo grass, de Necker has planted the yellow-lime green Acorus "Golden edge" en masse. For further contrast, and height, he has grouped three statuesque, deep-purple cordylines within the Acorus. Spiky leaved Juncus is used for additional texture and height.

The same deep purple of the cordylines is repeated by New Zealand flax (Phormium) that is

densely planted in a raised bed that runs the entire length of the boundary wall.

The particular variety was chosen because it remains compact. A line of Cocus palms rises out of the phormiums to add further height to the garden and complete the grassy, airy effect.

The only flower in the garden is the small, shrubby Felicia, an indigenous, blue daisy that surrounds the natural pond. Its rounded leaves stand out in stark contrast to the spiky leaves of the grasses and phormiums.

The point that de Necker makes with this garden is that foliage can be just as colourful as flowers and, unlike flowers; it retains its colour year round.

The design is also flexible enough for annuals to be incorporated should the client change his mind.

The final result is a garden that requires almost no maintenance, apart from watering (via an automatic irrigation system) and thinning out. Only the Felicia may need to be replaced every two or three years if they are not cut down annually to prevent them from becoming woody.

For more information email info@thefriendlyplant.co.za or contact 082 805 0910.

HOMETALK — FOOD



Refreshing fruit of many uses

The quince could arguably be one of the most romantically mysterious fruits in existence. Hennie Fisher explains

Quince and apple marzipan cake:

Lawson's original recipe proposes baking this cake in a ring tin, but I feel that such cakes tend to have a lumpy, home-baked feel.

Grease and paper in a 28cm cake tin. Preheat oven to 170°C. In the bowl of a freestanding mixer or food processor, beat together the following ingredients until creamy:

- 250g softened butter
- 250g marzipan
- 150g castor sugar
- ¼ teaspoon almond essence
- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract

Once pale and creamy, add six eggs, one at a time, until well combined before adding the next. Then mix in 150g of self-raising flour and mix until just combined. Bake for at least an hour and 10 minutes, but check after about 50 minutes by inserting a cake testing pin that

should come out clean when the cake is cooked.

In the meantime make the filling by simmering, on medium heat, three apples and two medium sized quinces in a thick-bottomed casserole — peeled and pips removed, and cut into 3cm chunks. Add 150g sugar and the juice of one lemon. Cook slowly with the lid on and stir frequently until an amalgamated mass is achieved and all the fruit has broken up to create a chunky purée.

Cut the cake into three layers and assemble with the cooled quince filling. One can opt to decorate the cake with some simple butter icing (perhaps with another drop of almond essence added) or simply leave it plain and dust it with a bit of icing sugar. Either way the cake definitely improves after a couple of days as the flavours meld together and become richer and fruitier.

Laden with pectin, quinces are perfect for making quince jelly. They are also perfect for creating another famous product known in English as Quince Cheese. In Sicily they have special pottery moulds that are handed down from one generation to the next for moulding Cotognata. Greek legend has it that a nymph offered Cotignac to Jupiter when he was a child; this has given rise to the 19th century French belief that eating Cotignac from Orléans benefits the minds of unborn children.

The Romans also extracted essential oil from quinces for use in perfumery and a nice little practical used would be to keep a ripe quince in the glove compartment of one's car; the fruit will not rot but gently shrivel up and perfume the car with a deep rich aroma for up to six months, a great saving and a good alternative to those rather horrid car fresheners that smell like loo spray.

Often cakes present one with too many layers of much-the-same sweetness and not enough variety and flavour nuances. I found a recipe by that queen of uncomplicated baking, Nigel Lawson, for marzipan cake that she serves with only fresh berries and a dusting of icing. I filled the layers instead with a quince and apple fruit spread which offered a nice balance between sweet and tart and created good dimension and variety in taste.

because of their rather astringent taste and tough texture, but there is mention of some smaller, mildly sweet varieties (newly developed) that can be eaten raw such as the "apple quince".

I doubt if we have any of these in SA yet, but it certainly is something to look out for on one's travels.

Available at the moment in our greengrocers, unripe quinces have a lovely white furry down covering them, which they lose as they mature and change to a deep yellow, slightly leathery, smooth skin. The fruits do not ripen well on the tree, and they are therefore picked and ripened separately. Quinces are traditionally not eaten raw