



Photo courtesy of Swanstone.com

High~Style, Low-Mainten

by Stephanie A. Young

They've never been trendier. They've never been more important. Bathrooms have gone from being the hidden room to being the hang-out room. From chandeliers and marble flooring, to bamboo ceiling fans and oversized Jacuzzi® tubs, today's bathrooms are designed with the same care given to the rest of the home.

Even the budgets are bigger. According to the *Kitchen & Bath Business Market Forecaster*, consumers spent an estimated \$23.7 billion updating their baths and the total number of bath remodeling jobs hit 8 million units in 2004.

Along with increased respect, baths are benefiting from a dazzling array of new products. For the first time in home building history, suppliers are producing fashion lines for faucets, sinks and wall accessories. Homeowners can even customize toilet handles! But regardless of how much you spend – or how high style you go, maintenance should be care-free. After all, it is still the bathroom!

PRODUCT SOLUTIONS

COUNTER-TOPS & SINKS: A one-piece countertop with an integral bowl eliminates cleaning around the seam of a drop-in bowl. Cultured marble, a low-cost alternative to laminate countertops, can be ordered with an integral bowl and backsplash. Some of the newer colors resemble granite or engineered stone.

Dupont™ Corian®, a higher-priced solid surface material, is non-porous – so there's no fear of stains or bacteria growth. Corian can be molded and formed to create interesting edges and it's completely seamless.

Engineered stone countertops, made with natural stone quartz, are also non-porous and care free. Versatile quartz products are heat and scratch resistant, and can be used in many types of applications within the bath – vanity tops, tub and shower surrounds, even walls and backsplashes. Unlike granite, quartz does not need to be sealed periodically.

FAUCET FINISHES: We've all had a simple chrome faucet at one time or another. Today, there's a wide variety of other alternatives with luxury finishes and decorative

colors, but some are more user-friendly than others.

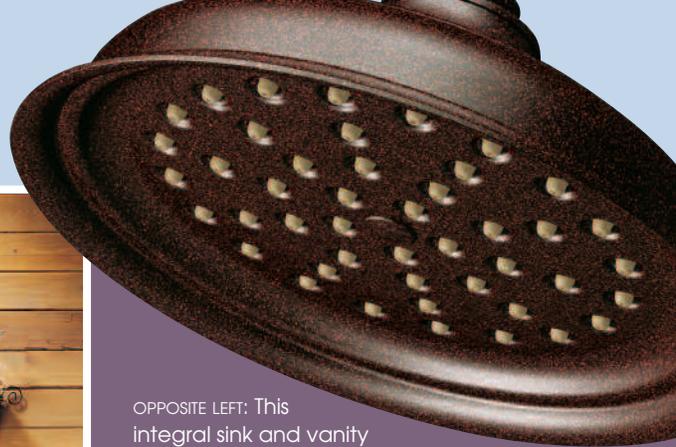
Polished nickel, gold or brass and other shiny metallic finishes can be a good choice if the finishes were created using Physical Vapor Deposition (PVD). The PVD process, which was originally developed for the jewelry industry, now adds strength and durability to the finishes of our plumbing fixtures. Faucets with a PVD lifetime finish – such as Moen's LifeShine® – are great choices since the finish is guaranteed to last a lifetime.

Oil rubbed bronze in its many shades wears well in hard water regions, but look out for faucets that are described as having "living finishes." These finishes can rub off or become discolored over time and create more work during cleaning.

Although beautiful and classy, brushed chrome, stainless steel or brushed bronzes tend to show water spots, especially in hard-water regions.

TUBS AND SHOWERS: If you plan to have tiled walls surrounding your tub or shower, choose a glazed or ceramic porcelain tile (as opposed to a porous natural stone).

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OPPOSITE LEFT: This integral sink and vanity from Swanstone features a solid surface that allows homeowners to buff out make-up or hair-dye with household cleansers.

LEFT: Swanstone's SwanTile tub wall kit offers the look of tile with no grout to clean. It's made of Veritek, a proprietary compression molded material with no surface coating to chip or crack.

ABOVE: The Isabel showerhead from ShowHouse by Moen is available in a variety of decorative finishes.



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ance Bathrooms

Sealing the grout (generally once a year) will help it stay cleaner.

Or you may want to avoid grout all together...with an acrylic tub or shower stall. Not only are they non-porous, they are vacuum-formed and can be molded into many configurations, incorporating helpful features like seats, built-in shelving and grab bars. They tend to be a little more expensive than their fiberglass counterparts, but are more durable and less likely to crack, chip or peel over time.

Sliding glass tub and shower doors appear low-maintenance, but can be difficult to deal with if you make a hasty decision. Clear or obscure glass, bypass or pivot, framed or frameless – those are the questions you'll want to clarify before investing in a good, easy-to-maintain shower door. A partial glass block wall is another popular option.

SHOWERHEADS: We're all having more fun with the new larger style showerheads these days. Take advantage of the shapes, sizes and spray patterns, but pay attention to the models that have rubber formers surrounding each of the spray nozzles. When

mineral build-up occurs, you can produce a clean showerhead by just gliding your fingers across the rubber formers!

The new Isabel single function rainfall showerhead from ShowHouse by Moen features a 7" spray face diameter, one pressurized spray pattern (water is forced out of the showerhead instead of delicately falling out of the spray heads) and offers a variety of decorative finishes to match your décor.

FLOORING: Laminate flooring can be a great alternative to tile – no grout lines to deal with, easy to clean, durable and long-lasting. In addition to its traditional wood styles, Pergo® Select offers laminate stone and tile selections. Choose the White Marble or Beige Slate to create a natural stone look.

PermaStone Modular from Nafco® by Tarkett Residential looks like stone but performs more like resilient flooring. It comes in large modular tile units comprised of various tile sizes. With its patented GroutFit system, it can be installed to look just like tile but with no grout lines to fuss with. It's easy to care for and resists scrapes, scuffs and abrasions with Nafco's unique wearever product.

WALLS: Although beautiful and elegant, wallpaper often doesn't stand up to steam and heat and has a nasty habit of peeling at the seams or generating small air-bubbles over time. It's also more difficult and labor intensive to remove and reinstall when you want to create a different look. Decorative painting techniques provide color and design, yet are durable, easy to clean and can be changed with the styles.

BUSY LIFESTYLES: Perhaps we can have our cake and eat it, too...beautiful design, luxurious products and low maintenance materials. Whether we are single Moms, career professionals or full-time homemakers managing active households, careful, conscious choices can enable us to have more time to do the things we love most. 🍌



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