

Mix And Match Your Woods

Concerned about which American hardwood to choose? Think you have to select just one so that the floors, furniture, cabinets and moldings all "match?"

Relax, say the experts at the Hardwood Information Center. Don't be afraid to blend different but complementary hardwoods and stains.

"Everything matching' is a mistake; it's not fashionable," says New York kitchen designer Florence Perchuk. Match woods in trim, floors and cabinets?

"No! Forget about matching! What's important is the relationship," says Patricia Hart McMillan, author of "Decorating for Dummies" (Wiley). A room with three or four warm woods is far more visually inviting than the matchy look.

For example, it's important to consider the role you want your

hardwood floor to play. A light floor will set off dark furniture beautifully or vice versa: the higher the contrast, the greater the impact.

To get acquainted with the possibilities, visit www.hardwoodinfo.com to see 22 American hardwoods in natural, light, medium and dark finishes.

And don't forget that hardwoods are a naturally soothing counterpoint to the starkness of home electronics. Designer John Buscarello says, "Flat-screen TVs are very big, cold, flat things; surrounding wood softens the high tech items."

Remember: interplays of hue, pattern and texture are the keys to successful interior design. You'd never cover every piece of furniture in the same pattern and fabric. Why repeat one wood on every surface?

Here are five easy ways to express yourself with American Hardwoods:

1. Add semi-custom cabinets throughout the house for extra storage that will organize, simplify and de-stress your life.

2. Feature hardwood moldings along the ceiling. Simple crown moldings begin around \$3/foot; carved at \$22/foot. Splurge with coffered beams (\$8,000 to \$12,000 for a 12 x 14 room) or halve that cost with plain beams.

3. Go for that maple countertop: dents, burns and nicks are easily repaired and you'll never know they happened.

4. Make any room more luxurious with classic hardwood blinds or shutters.

5. Accent the dining room with chair rails or wainscoting.



Whether its for storage or display, hardwood built-ins are attractive and practical. These maple shelves complement the mixed hardwood floor — ash, cherry, maple, red and white oak, poplar and walnut.

Ten Easy Bathroom Makeover Tips

Tip #1 — Find a theme. If you love music, accent the bathroom with a bust of Beethoven, old instruments, musical note soaps and towels.

Tip #2 — Add or replace ceiling mouldings. Use a product, such as urethane millwork from Style Solutions, which resists moisture and high humidity.

By selecting Miterless Crown Moulding Systems for her bathroom, Taylor was able to gain even more texture and definition — and eliminate mitering hassles.

Tip #3 — Break up — and set apart — white trim in the room by using colors on the walls and ceiling.

Tip #4 — For color inspiration, start with a rug or towels that you love.

Then, faux finish accent pieces, including your trim, with the same colors.

Tip #5 — Add texture to your bathroom by selecting woodgrain styles of carved scroll brackets.

Faux finish the brackets and use them to create towel racks and wall mounts for shelves.

Tip #6 — Surround yourself with elegance. For Taylor, this meant adding fluted pilasters and a crosshead around her shower enclosure.

Tip #7 — Don't forget your ceiling. Two-piece ceiling medallions from Style Solutions install in less than 10 minutes around ceiling fans and lights.

Tip #8 — Add distinct accent pieces.

A small wall niche inserted

between the studs provides the perfect space for bath soaps or a flower arrangement.

Tip #9 — To open up the bathroom, reduce fabric around windows to let in more light. Concerned about privacy?

Consider replacing bathroom windows with obscure acrylic or glass block windows from Hy-Lite products that allow in natural light and air while preventing people from looking in your home.

Tip #10 — Define your bathtub area by installing decorative urethane panels on the exterior of the tub surround.

"By using faux finishes and millwork pieces to lighten the bathroom, I was able to create defined spaces for my tub, toilet area, vanity and shower," says Taylor.

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