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TREND REPORT

New and Now

From “Granny” wallpaper and Me-Decade shades to drought-proof lawns and locally sourced insulation, here’s what pros are looking forward to in the year ahead.

By Sarah Stebbins

Anyone who has seen a high-schooler rocking a Nirvana T-shirt and '90s mom jeans understands that trends are cyclical. And right now in the design world, we're pulling from ancient times through, yes, the '90s if you count the questionable “Tuscan” decorating moment and its accompanying Venetian plaster, a finish that’s fashionable once again. But in the right context, old ideas can feel refreshing, even timeless. Take this living room, designed by Portland’s Heidi Lachapelle, with its painterly plaster walls and '70s-inspired curved shapes and earthy shades — all current trends delivered without a whiff of mustiness. Here, we dig into these and other pro-approved looks and introduce locally made building materials just hitting the market. Pick and choose your favorites to create your stylish, sustainable Maine home.



ERIN LITTLE (PHOTO); HEIDI LACHAPELLE INTERIORS (DESIGN), WHITTEN ARCHITECTS (ARCHITECTURE), K.P. HOOD CONSTRUCTION (BUILD)

Artful Plaster

▲ To give drywall a textural, Old World feel — or to soften a metal range hood or brick fireplace surround — designers are specifying raw and tinted plaster, such as polished Venetian or matte gypsum. “The goal is to see the hand of the person who did it, the visible trowel marks,” says Lachapelle, who used gypsum plaster to add warmth and dimension to this modern New Hampshire living room. For her own bath remodel, Falmouth designer Susie Smith Coughlin plans to coat the shower in tadelakt — a traditional Moroccan finish of lime plaster and natural soap that forms a mold- and mildew-resistant waterproof barrier. Bonus: “No grout lines!” DIYers can achieve a plaster look by brushing on limewash — a lime-and-water solution that leaves a mottled, chalky finish.

Good Wood

▼ In 2019, Belfast Passive House architect Matt O'Malia and materials chemist Josh Henry began transforming a 600,000-square-foot former paper mill in Madison into a facility for manufacturing wood-fiber insulation from the softwood chips that pile up at Maine lumber mills. Next year, their TimberHP line of high-performing blown-in, batt, and board insulation will roll out. "There's been this realization that there's more to building performance than just operational efficiency," O'Malia says. "There's what you're actually putting into the buildings." Many insulation products are non-recyclable, a source of skin and respiratory irritants, and derived from, or heavily reliant on, fossil fuels. Wood fiber is recyclable, non-toxic, renewable, and locally sourced. "So often you read about sustainable solutions and there's a trade-off," O'Malia says. "I'm a biased source, but I'm excited about this because it really is a solution."



"Granny" Wallpaper

▲ "We've watched modern farmhouse, Scandi style, and mid-century modern dominate our social-media feeds for the past decade and we're finally hitting a tipping point," Smith Coughlin says. Her clients are gravitating to "grandmillennial style," a phrase that refers to a younger generation's penchant for mixing an older one's traditional patterns, fabric trimmings, and heirloom furniture (page 46). A hallmark of the look? Nostalgic wallpaper, often retooled in darker colors, matte finishes, and more streamlined patterns, says Smith Coughlin, who favors Rifle Paper Co.'s flower-packed prints. Lachapelle, who used a 1914 Morris & Co. botanical in this early 1800s New Hampshire farmhouse, typically reserves "granny chic" for older homes "where it's always been part of the aesthetic."



Clover Lawns

▲ For Portland- and Stoneham, Massachusetts-based landscape architect Matthew Cunningham, last summer's severe drought was a flashing red sign telling us to give up our water-guzzling lawns. His own lawn is a grass-and-microclover blend that is self-sustaining — nitrogen-producing microclover "spoon feeds" the nutrient to the grass, eliminating the need for fertilizers — and drought-tolerant, thanks to microclover's deep roots, and slow growth. Watering a couple times a month is typically sufficient, Cunningham says, and "I only mowed seven times this past season." He recommends overseeding with microclover — a dwarf variety of Dutch white clover — in the spring, and augmenting your garden with drought-tolerant native plants while you're at it. "We have to stop thinking of our yards in this isolated manner," he says. "They have to be part of a bigger context."

Solar Surge

► Phil Kaplan, of Portland's Kaplan Thompson Architects, believes the recently passed federal Inflation Reduction Act, with its provision allowing homeowners to deduct 30 percent of the cost of a solar-panel installation from their income taxes, will inspire more Mainers to take the plunge. "It used to be that we'd hold solar until the end and, if a house was under budget, we'd do it — and often it was the first thing to go," Kaplan says. "Now, we try to draw solar panels on every building, and explain why they make financial sense at the outset." Indeed, Fortunat Mueller, of ReVision Energy, says installations that are financed with mortgages, or loans, generally pay for themselves in energy savings right away.



From top: Skimming Stone, London Clay, and Pigeon by Farrow & Ball, and Avocado by Benjamin Moore

Earthy Colors

◀ Pantone's periwinkle 2022 Color of the Year appears to be an outlier in a post-lockdown era saturated in earthy, 70s-inspired shades. "I think with everyone spending more time outdoors during Covid, they're wanting that feeling in their homes," says Yarmouth designer Samantha Pappas, who, along with Smith Coughlin and Lachapelle, has been reaching for rich brown, mushroomy gray, tawny flax, and warm green tones that have a calming quality — like nature. "They want things to feel cozy and comfortable." (Read: not white-on-white minimalist.) Which is understandable. Like today, the '70s was a time of social unrest. Add to that a recent global pandemic, and "people need to feel like their home is a place of serenity," Smith Coughlin says.

Curve Appeal

▼ Last year, Pinterest saw searches for curved couches increase threefold over the previous one, a Zillow consumer poll found them to be a top design trend, and Milanese architect/designer Mario Bellini's bulbous 1970s Camaleonda sofa dominated Instagram. Rounded edges on seating and tables connote comfort and conjure shapes found in nature, especially when matched with earthy shades (above). They're also "really elegant in a modern, rectilinear room to create balance," says Lachapelle, who likes to "float" a sinuous piece in an open plan. "There's something really nice about kitchen cabinetry, island, dining table, curved sofa — it helps to break up that line." Nickey Kehoe curved sofa, from \$7,000. nickeykehoe.com

INSULATION: COURTESY OF TIMBERHP; LIVING ROOM: ERIN LITTLE (PHOTO); HEIDI LACHAPELLE INTERIORS (DESIGN); KAPLAN THOMPSON ARCHITECTS (ARCHITECTURE); K.P. HOOD CONSTRUCTION (BUILD); LAWN: MATTHEW CUNNINGHAM (PHOTO AND DESIGN); HOUSE: IRVIN SERRANO (PHOTO); KAPLAN THOMPSON ARCHITECTS (ARCHITECTURE); ROSCOE BUILDERS (BUILD); SOFA: COURTESY OF NICKEY KEHOE



Natural Selections

▲ When it comes to the more permanent elements in a home — flooring, millwork, countertops — designers are leaning into an anti-trend: timelessness. “For a while, floors were going gray, so you’d take oak and change it into this other thing,” Lachapelle says, “whereas now we’re wanting materials to exist in their most natural state.” Long partial to white oak, she’s recently been experimenting with clear pine (finished with Bona NordicSeal to prevent yellowing), for a modern, relatively knot-free look, and ash, which she prizes for its “expressive grain.” For countertops, natural stone, such as marble and soapstone — seen here looking like abstract art atop a walnut vanity in a New Gloucester powder room by Windham designer Jenny Morrison — have the edge over man-made materials, such as quartz.



Building in Place

◀ The pandemic had many people looking askance at their yards and bonus rooms and wondering, How can I make this cooler? “Instead of traveling, it was like, let’s make the place you are the place you want to be,” says Kaplan, whose firm recently divided an above-the-garage space in New Hampshire into an exercise room and guest quarters and erected a “party barn” in Harpswell (left) with a workshop, pottery studio, rec space, workout area, DJ booth, and pair of guest rooms. A new state law aimed at curbing the affordable-housing crisis by permitting homeowners to build accessory dwelling units, or ADUs — small, self-contained structures that are either attached to or near a primary house — has the potential to further the backyard housing boom. Maine architecture and building firms are ready with new prefab ADU lines. Head to mainehomes.com to learn more.

Reimagined Antiques

▼ Designers Elena Duralde and Leah Lippmann, of Portland- and Boothbay-based Knickerbocker Group, are noticing people in their 20s through early 40s inheriting antiques from downsizing parents “and wanting to repurpose them in a way they haven’t before,” says Duralde, who counts herself among them. With new fabric — like the copper-colored velvet on this 1940s channel-back chair, reupholstered by Portland’s Home Remedies — bold paint, or a fresh stain “you can transform something to meet your aesthetic,” she says, and avoid new-furniture lead times. (Upholsterers may have wait times of six months or longer, however.) Smith Coughlin sees clients incorporating antiques as part of the grandmillennial trend (page 44) and a broader sustainability push. “They care about what they put in their homes from an environmental perspective,” she says, “and they don’t want disposable furniture.”



Moroccan Tile

▲ You’ve seen them on showers, backsplashes, hearths, even range hoods: grids of shimmering glazed tiles of slightly varying thicknesses. Hand-cut mosaic Zellige tiles — formed from Moroccan clay and used for centuries on walls, fountains, and pools in Africa and the Middle East — are the current darlings of the design world. Mostly employed in monochromatic, as opposed to traditional mosaic, schemes, they’re beloved for their imperfect shapes, non-uniform glazes that impart a watercolor effect, and — because they must be installed tightly — almost imperceptible grout lines. “You’re not going to get a perfectly flat wall,” says Pappas, who installed Clé Zellige tile in the Cumberland kitchen above. “But that’s the beauty of it.”

BATH: JEFF ROBERTS (PHOTO); MORRISON DESIGN HOUSE (DESIGN); CALEB JOHNSON STUDIO (ARCHITECTURE); R.P. MORRISON BUILDERS (BUILD); NORTHE WOODWORKING (CABINET); CHAIR: TARA RICE (PHOTO); HOME REMEDIES (UPHOLSTERY); BARN: IRVIN SERRANO (PHOTO); KAPLAN THOMPSON ARCHITECTS (ARCHITECTURE); BENJAMIN + CO. (BUILD); KITCHEN: COURTNEY ELIZABETH (PHOTO); SAMANTHA S. PAPPAS DESIGN (DESIGN); MGM BUILDERS (BUILD); SIDING: ERIN LITTLE (PHOTO); TYLER KARU DESIGN (DESIGN); MGM BUILDERS (BUILD)



Smart Siding

▲ Following a \$150 million investment, Nashville-based LP Building Solutions began manufacturing its engineered-wood SmartSide siding in New Limerick last spring. Composed of compressed wood strands, waxes, and resins coated with zinc borate, the siding is supremely durable — the company warranties its materials for 50 years and factory-applied finishes for 15 — rot- and pest-resistant, and makes use of a renewable resource. It’s also affordable — about 68 percent less than cedar and half the cost of hemlock. Due to its high level of processing and use of proprietary resins, SmartSide is not perfectly green. But given its sustainable main ingredient, cost, warranties, and local sourcing, Kaplan Thompson architect Adam Wallace says it was a “no-brainer” to install on his home, and he recommends it to clients. □