

Home Improvement and Home Decor



**The Eagle-Tribune**

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MAD FOR PLAID

Fashion moment for color pattern extends to housewares, home decor

By LEANNE ITALIE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Plaids are having a fashion moment as retailers and designers play with the classic pattern. But the apparel and footwear industries are sharing the love: Fresh takes on plaid have made headway in housewares and home decor, too.

“The great thing about plaid is that you can take it in so many different directions,” said Kristen Chalupa, a kitchen and tabletop product manager for Crate & Barrel.

Through scale, color and application, plaids can be complex and traditional, or simplified for a clean, updated look, she said.

“There’s something very recognizable and nostalgic about plaid,” Chalupa said.

CREATIVE TOUCH

Looking for more ways to incorporate plaid? Here are some other options:

ISAAC MIZRAHI: The designer sells on QVC, and recently sold out of a ceramic, pedestal cake plate with a set of matching plates in bold preppy designs of green and blue.

TERVIS: A springy plaid called poppy was used on double-wall Fiesta plastic wrap tumblers in two sizes: 16 and 24 ounces. A set of highball glasses at Fitz and Floyd were designed in a contemporary, minimalist take on plaid.

RALPH LAUREN: Plaid is alive and well for apparel and for the home at Ralph Lauren. A red tartan was used for a porcelain cup-and-saucer set trimmed in gold, along with dinnerware in the same pattern. A rustic plaid of red, black and gray inspired by a vintage Ralph Lauren blanket was carried over to napkins and placemats in woven linen. The company also put a similar vintage-inspired plaid in wool on a picture frame.

WILLIAMS-SONOMA: Tartan was also paired here, but in chrome, for picture frames in red and blue. The traditional plaid also adorns everything from mugs and tabletop runners to pillow covers and a Christmas stocking. One modern take on plaid is a hand-woven, hair-on cowhide pillow cover in broad red and black stripes against a white background.

Her company went for nostalgic, but also took a more modern approach in recent offerings, with updated



The ED On Air cotton reversible quilt set by Ellen DeGeneres plays on the plaid craze.

QVC via AP

plaids in table linens and such kitchen items as an oven mitt, pot holder, apron and dishtowel in a matching pattern of bright red, green, yellow and blue.

Over the holidays, a wide plaid with a metallic shimmer was on sale there in Christmas wrapping paper, a plaid throw in Christmas red and green was called “Cratchit,” and Crate & Barrel also built a crosshatched plaid into the handcrafted iron wire front of a mid-century-influenced fireplace screen.

Target has embraced plaid

in a variety of ways, including a limited-edition collaboration with sportswear designer Adam Lippes in mostly apparel and accessories, playing on the classic buffalo design. The retailer also offered some unlikely items such as special-issue Chapstick sets of three lip balms and plaid-decorated bottles of Listerine mouthwash in yellow, green and blue.

“Plaid has been a defining element of style for every generation,” said Amy Goetz, a Target spokeswoman. “Offering it across different

categories allows our guests to experience that element of surprise as they browse throughout the entire store.”

Both classic and contemporary plaids are plentiful throughout the retail universe in couches, curtains and bedding, but also now in non-traditional color schemes that include soft pinks. Ugg Australia sells a calming glacier plaid in soft wool, in blue, white and light tan with fringe at one hem just down from a decorative three-button closure.

Pinterest is awash with ways to decorate a home using plaid, including wallpaper in red to anchor a cozy, book-filled study, and building a plaid design in contemporary bathroom or kitchen wall tile.

The design need not scream rustic, country or all things Scotland. Graham-brown.com offers a thoroughly modern take on plaid in a charcoal-and-white wall covering that lends a more sophisticated air against a white floor and contemporary white easy chair.

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GRAB THE CRAFT GLUE

FAMILY FEATURES

When you grow bored with your furnishings or want to change up the look and feel of a room, you may find yourself trying to put off redecorating until you have a bigger budget. Instead, you can give the furniture you already have a unique, fresh look at a fraction of the cost.

These projects from the crafting experts at Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Stores show how easy it can be to transform a tired old desk or a basic dining chair into one-of-a-kind pieces that complement your space perfectly.

CHALK ACRYLIC PAINT DESK

CRAFTING TIME: WEEKEND PROJECT

SKILL LEVEL: BEGINNER

Supplies and Tools

Painter's tape
FolkArt Home Decor Chalk:
Imperial or color of choice
2-inch paintbrush

Hand sander and 80-grit sandpaper
Soft cloth
Dark wax

Instructions

Using painter's tape, tape off areas not to be painted. Paint desk. Allow to dry and re-coat as needed.

When dry, distress edges with hand sander until desired look is achieved. Using soft cloth, wipe on dark wax and buff.

SITTING PRETTY PAINTED CHAIR

CRAFTING TIME: 1 TO 2 HOURS

SKILL LEVEL: INTERMEDIATE

Supplies and Tools

White cotton canvas to cover seat and back of chair
Masking tape in a variety of widths
Tulip Soft Fabric Paint in ebony, crimson red, royal blue and sunshine yellow
Foil or foam plate for palette
Paintbrushes
Spray paint in coordinating color
Scissors

Aleene's Fast Grab Tacky Spray
Aleene's Fast Grab Tacky Glue
Staple gun and staples
Craft knife
Black trim fabric
Glam-It-Up! Iron-On Crystals in clear

Tulip Cordless Heat Setting Tool

Instructions

Lay canvas flat on work surface. Randomly place a variety of tape strips on canvas, intersecting strips to create abstract lines and shapes.

Fill in open areas between tape strips with fabric colors, using one dominant shade for majority of sections, with other colors as occasional accents. Remove tape and allow fabric to dry.

Remove old upholstery from chair. Reserve it to use as a pattern for cutting painted fabric.

Spray paint chair base; allow to dry.

Cut out painted canvas to fit chair backing and base.

Apply tacky spray to chair base and position painted fabric over base. This will help to hold new fabric in place while gluing and stapling edges. Repeat for chair back.

Use tacky glue around the edges of fabric to secure it to chair base and back. Use staple gun to secure fabric edges on the base and back for additional security. Trim excess fabric around edges with craft knife. Cover edges of fabric and staples with black trim, secured with tacky glue. Allow glue to dry completely.

Cut out heart shape from scrap of painted canvas. Cover heart with clear crystals and use heat-setting tool to set crystals in place, following instructions on packaging. Use tacky glue to secure crystal heart to chair back. Allow to dry.

Source: Jo-Ann Fabric and Craft Stores



ABOVE: This chalk acrylic paint desk project can spruce up a tired piece of furniture in a matter of a couple hours.

Courtesy photos

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Get organized: Tips for completing a closet makeover

FAMILY FEATURES

It's that time of year when you think about getting organized for a fresh new start. But how many times have you thought about finally clearing out your closet, decided it's just too overwhelming, and simply shut the door only to think about it later?

"Let's face it, most of us put cleaning out and organizing our closets at the top of our New Year's resolutions' list every single year," Barbara Reich, professional organizer, said. "But how many of us just think about it without actually doing it? To get serious and take action, you need a plan of attack."

Once you make a commitment and get on board with the project, go from there with these tips from Reich:

- Start by determining your overall goal. Are you simply organizing what



Courtesy photo

Do-it-yourself closet organizers, such as those from ClosetMaid, make it simple to create a customized design.

you have or do you need to purge unused items? Get rid of things you don't need or won't wear. Remember that items in good condition can be donated to those in need.

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Barbara Reich, professional organizer

- Once you've determined just how much stuff you'll have to organize, it's time to consider what systems will best fit your space and needs. A do-it-yourself closet organizer product, such as ClosetMaid ShelfTrack, is affordable, easy to install and adjustable, making it simple to create a customized design. Accessories, such as drawers and shoe shelves, help personalize the space, while fabric bins are perfect for storing handbags and other smaller items.

- Before you decide

exactly which pieces you need, sketch out your plan on paper or use an online design tool. ClosetMaid's DIY Design Tool even provides a parts list to help ensure you buy the right pieces for your design. You may also find it helpful to make a categorized list of all the items you need to store and mark them off as you identify the right storage products for your space.

- Once you install your new system, the fun really begins. Start by hanging as much as possible; this makes it easier to see what

you have. Group and place like things together by category, such as pants, skirts, tops, etc., then within each category, group by season and by color. Take advantage of prime real estate by positioning the things you wear most often in the place that is most accessible and easiest to reach.

- Once you have everything hung and stored in its proper place, congratulate yourself on having the closet makeover checked off your list. However, to continue enjoying your newfound organization, you must be vigilant about keeping the space organized. Have a plan in mind when you purchase new things. Ask yourself if you really need the item and determine what you can discard to make room.

For more tips to help you get organized this new year, visit ClosetMaid.com, StorganizationBlog.com or call 800-874-0008.



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PRIMP-PERFECT HAVENS

Ideas, products for creating a welcoming bathroom

By KIM COOK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

What makes a great bathroom, one perfect for prepping and primping?

A well-considered combination of fixtures, lighting and amenities — the kind we often first experience in a really nice hotel.

“Bathrooms are the most private parts of our homes. They’re also the most private parts of hotels, our ‘homes away from home,’” said Los Angeles author Anneli Rufus, who has written travel books, among others. It’s the sense of a space that’s exclusively ours that’s appealing, she said, enhanced by fittings and fluffy towels.

We often want to recreate that luxury-hotel experience when we return home, said Paul Flowers, chief design officer for Lixil, the Tokyo-based parent company of higher-end, bath-product brands like DXV and Grohe. The bathroom, he said, “is moving from a rational space for cleaning and grooming into an emotional space for relaxation and contemplation.”

Here are some ways to bring the hotel-style bathroom home:

LIGHT THE WAY

Flicking on that hotel

bathroom light switch is often where the magic begins: Complexions look healthier, skin smoother.

“Typically, the best type of lighting is layered, because it addresses the bathroom’s different lighting needs,” said interior designer Jessica Shankman of Laurel & Wolf in West Hollywood, California.

“I always recommend installing a dimmer to control the light output and create a different atmosphere in the room,” she said. That might mean bright lights when you get dressed, for instance, and soft lighting while you soak in the tub.

For makeup application, task lighting’s your best friend, she said: “I suggest mounting wall sconces on either side of the mirror to provide shadow-free lighting on the face.”

LED lighting has had a big impact on bath design. Old-school vanity lighting often involved harsh fluorescents or intrusive marquee lights. Now, the lighting can be embedded in the mirror itself, and the reflection can be warm and flattering. Duravit’s L-Cube mirror, for instance, is a frame of LED light that can be dimmed with a touch of the hand. (www.duravit.us)

LEDs have also given



Hastings Tile & Bath via AP

The Onda Vanity, part of Hastings Tile & Bath’s Design Flexibility Collection, highlights how curves are bringing a sophisticated attitude to the bath.

product designers new places to put lighting, such as under toilet seat rims and around the perimeters of spa tubs.

In some cases, the lights change color, so the mood of the room can be adjusted, to provide a soothing blue, say, or a zesty yellow/orange glow. (www.paulmann.com)

Or opt for a color-changing HotelSpa or DreamSpa shower head from ipShower, with colors that shift depending on the water temperature. (www.ipshowers.com)

Designers are also pulling in lighting from other rooms — such as chandeliers and pendants — to amp up the drama and luxe look in a

bathroom.

GEARED UP

High tech and personalization continue to move into the bathroom.

American Standard’s SpaLet toilet/bidet by DXV features a heated seat, temperature-controlled bidet, automated flush, and a seat that opens and closes via sensor. (www.d xv.com)

Bluetooth-enabled sound systems and vanity mirrors embedded with TVs bring soundtracks and programs into the bathing environment. (www.zadroinc.com, www.seura.com)

And Broan-NuTone’s

Premium Humidity Sensing Control monitors moisture levels and automatically turns on the fan before the mirrors steam up. (www.broan.com)

WARM AND WELCOMING

Sheila Schmitz, editor at the homes website Houzz.com, sees a trend toward treating the bathroom as more of a “living room.”

“Our users love it when they see a bathroom warmed up with vintage and furniture-like details,” she said. “Console tables, comfortable chairs, and new or repurposed dressers make a bathroom feel more like a living space than just a place to

wash up.”

Chameleon Concepts offers bespoke wall-mounted vanities with or without decorative legs. Select your style and finish, and then add a front panel insert like patterned paper, faux leather, mosaic or marble. (www.chameleonconcepts.com)

Philippe Starck’s Cape Cod vanity features a vessel sink perched on a walnut, oak or beech wood slab, hewn to resemble driftwood. A coordinating free-standing bathtub is crafted of a new material with a satin finish and soft feel. (www.duravit.us)

Undulating curves on the Onda collection of vanities and counter basins have a sensuous and playful vibe. (www.hastingsstileandbath.com)

Designer brand Axor teamed up with Japanese design studio Nendo to create the LampShower, which features an LED light encased in a brass showerhead that looks like a lampshade. (www.hansgrohe-usa.com)

You can add jewel-box drama or resort-style ambience to a bathroom with art deco, tropical or geometric wallpapers, while aromatherapy diffusers and live plants generate a spa-like feel. Create a Zen vibe using a feature wall of grasscloth, stone or wood, along with minimalist wall-mounted fittings. Built-in cabinetry can add to the sense of calm by letting you stow away the clutter of toiletries.

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Savvy ways to keep warm this winter, while saving energy

By KATHERINE ROTH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

As winter wears on, a few cheap and easy fixes can help keep homes warm while saving energy and money.

The average household spends about \$2,000 a year on utilities, almost half of which goes toward heating and cooling, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Luckily, a little savvy can go a long way toward reducing heating bills. Here are five ideas from the energy experts:

THINK CLEAN AND EFFICIENT

“Check your furnace filter on a monthly basis. If it’s dirty, it won’t function as efficiently as it could,” said Lauren Urbanek, senior energy policy advocate for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

The EPA recommends cleaning or replacing

furnace filters every three months.

And Bob McGee, a spokesman for the Con Edison utility company, said, “Make sure someone comes in to tune up the heating system once a year. Service contracts are always a good idea.”

If you’re in the market for a new furnace, opt for an Energy Star-certified model. Some upgrades can reduce heating costs by as much as 30 percent, McGee said.

“And remember to make sure the heating vents aren’t blocked and that everything’s cleared out of the way, otherwise you’ll be heating your drapes or the back of your furniture instead of the room,” Urbanek said.

GET WITH THE PROGRAM

Consider investing in a programmable thermostat to maximize energy efficiency. “We recommend keeping it set to between 68

and 72 degrees when people are home, and then down to between 55 and 65 when no one is home and at night,” Urbanek said.

The EPA says the thermostat should be set to 8 degrees lower than normal at night and when no one’s home.

Some utility companies provide programmable thermostats for free or offer rebates, so it’s worth calling your energy provider before heading to the hardware store.

PUT WINDOWS, FANS TO WORK

“Make sure your curtains are open when the sun is out and closed when it’s dark and cold outside,” Urbanek said. “And remember that warm air rises, so if you have a ceiling fan, keeping it on low with the blade direction reversed (moving clockwise) will gently bring the warm air back down.”

SEAL AND INSULATE

If you’re doing all that and your bills are still high, the Natural

Resources Defense Council recommends checking for air leaks in your home and duct systems.

“Things like caulking and window stripping are really easy to do,” Urbanek said.



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