

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Outside influence

Colors of nature showing up in more homes

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COLOR MARKETING GROUP

Shades of silver and blue-gray, such as this Nycon Wallcovering from J. Josephson Inc., will be popular next year.



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Cool grays inspired by nature will be popular in 2008, according to the Color Marketing Group.



Citrusy oranges such as the shade in this room designed by Kellie Toole of Gahanna are forecast to be popular.



Nature remains the rave. The environmental movement is crusading ahead with carbon-free campaigns, and Al Gore just won the Nobel Peace Prize for raising awareness of global warming. Homeowners are increasingly buying "green" products when redecorating or remodeling. The Earth seems to be on everyone's minds -- and the colors expected to be popular in home decor next year prove it. "The No. 1 influence is sustainability, the whole environment issue, which is a long-term issue," said Jack Bredenfoerder, president of the Color Marketing Group, an association of color professionals.

Paint and color-marketing companies recently released their forecasts for 2008, and tones inspired by nature continue to be hot: earthy greens, silvers and grays, citrus yellows and oranges, and orchid like purples.

"We are seeking balance, sanctuary and calm from external stress and pressure, which is sometimes achieved by returning to nature," said Aimee Desrosiers, a color expert for California Paints. Cool grays and silvers -- some reminiscent of snow-capped mountains -- are on the upswing.

"What's new is they are taking on a cooler tint, a little inspired by the ice," Bredenfoerder said. "With global warming, it seems to be a real issue."

Although they could be cold and sterile, the icy grays have a hint of blue, giving them warmth and a soothing feel.

"They aren't the cool steely grays. It's going to be much warmer, neutral grays," said Sheri Thompson, director of color marketing and design at Sherwin-Williams, the Cleveland paint maker.

Gahanna interior designer Kellie Toole has noticed the trend toward bluish grays and silvers, too.

"It hasn't quite hit yet, but it was big at (the International Home Furnishings) Market. It's more of a French blue or a spa blue," she said.

The grays, which once were inflected with a touch of earthy brown, now have slight shades of cool blue.

The shades were popular on fashion runways two years ago and now are trickling down to home decor, following the usual progression.

California Paints also expects that nature-inspired colors will be in vogue for the coming year.

Desrosiers said the new grays and silvers could show up as early as Christmas in decorations, linens and paint.

Other colors expected to surge to the fore are "organic mixtures of yellow and green." Also predicted to gain favor are cool stony grays and gray browns, she said.

In particular, two California Paints colors, Pretty Shady (a grayish green) and Papaya (a fruity orange) reflect "soothing colors of nature."

And the trend toward mimicking colors of nature shows no sign of stopping with wall paint.

"Look for a tremendous use of natural materials and colors, decorating with stones, metals, woods, glass, plant materials and colors that are complex and natural," she said.

Likewise, Benjamin Moore's sample paints for the 2008 color trends show lots of earthy tones. One of the top three accent colors is Split Pea, a brownish-green shade that, predictably, looks like a smashed pea.

The environmental movement is "so pervasive and such a large trend," said Doty Horn, Benjamin Moore's director of color and design. Society has neglected nature-inspired colors in recent years, she added.

The company has separated its colors into three themes: Modern Tranquility, a selection of neutral and light grays, beiges and warm whites; Organic Comforts, dominated by earthy greens, yellows and reds; and Pure Opulence, with more vibrant yet still nature-inspired hues of brown, red brick, teal and violet.

"Strong, bright neon colors have gone by the wayside. We're toning them down so you can live with them longer. It's the evolution of color," Horn said.

Both Desrosiers and Bredenfoerder predict that colors that change in different light conditions will be on the rise. The chameleonlike effect is created by new finishes that are becoming available in various industries.

The trend could migrate to consumer goods such as fabrics or cars.

Desrosiers also has one specific prediction: Red will be on the rise, thanks to the 2008 Olympics taking place in Beijing, which flies the red flag of China.

Also, red fits with the continuing popularity of Asian-influenced design.

Citrus oranges also will be popular, Toole said.

Still, many people don't follow the forecasts, she said.

"Colors are across the board. It really is a personal issue."

Thompson agrees.

"The new golden rule in decorating is, there are no rules. Color and texture and home decor should reflect your personality," Thompson said.

Still, there are trends.

"We're not seeing huge changes, just some shifts in colors. Orange is still hugely popular, but it's getting to a darker coral," Thompson said.

She also has noticed the influence of the environmental movement and an increased use of neutral colors.

"Neutrals bring a sense of stability to the house."

Shades of brown and darker grays are influenced by an increased use of bare materials in home decor, such as naked concrete or woods.

"They are very flexible colors. They take on the environment they are in."