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Colors falling back to Earth

Hot decorating hues take cue from nature

By Elaine Gaston
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Paint colors and home accessories for fall and beyond are being inspired by nature, the season's changing hues and Earth's edible treasures.

A palette depicting the natural warmth and beauty of the fall season emerges in wall colors and home decor in earthy chocolate browns, deep tomato reds, fresh sage greens, rich cranberry reds, shimmering grays, zesty peppery reds, citrusy yellows and greens, radiant golds and midnight plums and black purples, shades inspired by vibrant fall sunsets, frosty morning skies, crisp changing leaves and cool evenings around the golden glow of a firepit.

"We usually see a slight warming of neutrals as we move into the fall," said **Aimee Desrosiers, a color forecaster and color expert with California Paints.** "This year's popular palettes will include everything from fusions of earthy yellows, greens and browns to lively citrus combinations, coppery golds and intense purples and reds. Culture and nature will continue to heavily influence home decor."

World events, cultural traditions and nature's changing seasons influence home design as well as the fashion runway, Desrosiers said.

For example, India's influence colors the hues vibrant, festive and zesty with coppery golds, browns and oranges.

China's intense reds and jade greens are being coupled with nature-inspired neutrals while inspiration from Latin America results in rich, warm and intense yellows, oranges, reds and purples.

Colors also are being influenced by a growing trend toward all things eco-friendly with green tones becoming representative of the growing environmental movement, showing up in shades of fern, palm, pine and sage.

"Green may just become the newest 'neutral' color," according to Debbie Zimmer, paint and color expert with The Rohm and Haas Paint Quality Institute, who forecast greens will be coupled with clear blue or aqua to create the feel of serenity in the home or blended with sandy tans and adobe browns for a cozy, earthy feel.

"From glass-like blues, botanical greens, dramatic black and white and whisper soft pink, color directions will drive towards individual self-expression, glamorous living experiences or an increasing awareness of important environmental causes," Zimmer said in a news release about paint color trends for fall and beyond.

While neutrals are being boosted with pops of colors, such as soft pinks, warm whites and citrusy yellows and greens, black and white together is gaining in popularity for its classic elegance, punched up with splashes of intense red or toned down with subtle pink or taupe. Metallics and animal prints remain hot for fall as well, favored for their capacity to invoke glamour and sophistication.

Inspired by people's desire to nest in the fall and through the winter come hues that evoke warmth, comfort and stability, like a tapestry with rich cranberry reds, warm browns and pumpkin oranges with touches of deep-toned blues. It's a palette that reflects people's interest in home-centered activities, such as home cooking, making crafts for the holidays and enjoying family time, Zimmer said.

"Handcrafted items create a sense of stability and security and these warm, creamy rich colors will do the same in your space," according to Zimmer.

Olympic Interior Paints introduced its fall color palette, aptly coined "Aura of Autumn," a collection of five colors inspired by the sights and sensations of the season with names like "Smoke Screen," a soft shade of gray; "Glowing Firelight," a burnt red-orange hue; "Rattan," an earthy green reminiscent of moss; "Sarsaparilla," inspired by the rich brown of java; and "Crescent Moon," a light-infused creamy beige.

"Increasingly, our homes are becoming a personal sanctuary and the place of respite and comfort we all want to retreat to from a hectic, busy life," said Andrea Piontek, senior color analyst and team leader of the color lab at Olympic, in a news release about fall colors. "The warm, enhancing colors in the 'Aura of Autumn' collection embody these feelings in an instant, setting the mood for the way we want to feel in our homes every day."

Paint color trends run parallel with what's hot in home decor as evidenced in new accessory collections at stores such as Home Goods.

The company's "Inspired Naturals" line features accessories in earthy colors like honey, hints of sage and warm brown. Patterns are ethnic-inspired or are expressed in botanical prints.

Its "Modern Elegance" line features a sophisticated palette of rich chocolate brown and silvery blue with accent pieces detailed with faux animal skin textures. And its "New Glamour" collection features pieces with intricate brocade and damask patterns, in black and white contrasted with pops of color in pink or purple or accented with metallic pieces like mirrored chests or filigree-detailed tabletops.

"For fall, people think about the harvest hues that are timeless every season," said Robyn Arvedon, decorating expert and spokesperson for Home Goods. "I think we're seeing a new twist on the traditional with nontraditional warm plums, eggplants, mixed with leafy soft greens, pale yellows and pinks and rusty orange."

While some homeowners may not have the energy to paint an entire room in one of the hot new colors, transitioning into fall can be as simple as changing out a few accessories to reflect the newest trends.

"There are so many touches you can do to give your home a hint of the season," Arvedon said.

Here are some of her decorating ideas:

Swap out throw pillows, choosing a darker color palette or one with a faux animal print.

Change out your lampshades or window treatments, choosing one in a hot fall color to infuse warmth.

Go with a new area rug such as a thick wool one in rich, autumn hues.

Hang a fall harvest wreath with dried fruits and branches with changing fall leaves over a mirror.

Toss a throw blanket in a faux animal print over the sofa or a side chair for a touch of class.

Bring in a piece of mirrored furniture or metallic piece for a "touch of luster and glamour without going overboard," Arvedon suggested.

"Home decor is so affordable and accessible," she said. "It's all about having fun and creating an inviting, interesting atmosphere that reflects your lifestyle and personality."

Painting tips

Not ready to go bold? Instead, paint an accent or feature wall in the dining room, behind the family room sofa or behind the master bed.

Color affects mood. Red is energizing. Use it in the dining room or on an accent wall. Blues invokes peace. Consider it in a bedroom or kitchen.

Cool gray is hot. It enhances the richness of complementary colors in any room and works well as a backdrop in the bedroom or living room.

Green is the new neutral, but it also works well as a primary color on a brick fireplace, ceiling, bathroom or bedroom.

Brown in shades reminiscent of chocolate or java isn't going away anytime soon. It works to add warmth to a bedroom or study, or injects energy as an accent color in any room. Chocolate brown and silvery blue remain a hot combination in home decor, but the newer combination pairs chocolate brown with soft pink.

Add a touch of cheer in a kitchen or living space with a jolt of light-infused beige, which pairs well with a darker shade, such as burnt red-orange.