

HOME DESIGN

WHAT'S HOT, WHAT'S NEXT

21

THINGS WE LOVE



GREAT ROOMS

HOMES THAT BOTH KIDS
AND DADS CAN LIVE WITH

MASTERING THE SPA AT HOME

BEYOND SOAPS, LOOFAHS, OILS: TWO EXPERTS LAY OUT THE HARDWARE FOR THE SYBARITIC BATHROOM

»» The master bathroom has become the private go-to destination for homeowners when they want alone time to unwind. Now it can be a true retreat at home—a spa bathroom. But a few loofahs, fizzy soaps and exotic oils won't take you there completely. You've got to take the plunge. That means rethinking the look of your bathroom—the hardware, the walls, the floors, the tub. It should have a clean, muted palette inspired by nature, uncluttered surroundings, organic materials, dark wood accents, dimmable lights, soothing water features, sculptural designs for the fixtures, faucets and hardware. It also means delighting the other senses, with pleasing sounds and fragrances.

Our two spa bathroom experts—**Julie Fisher**, an architect with fe STUDIO Inc. in Chicago (festudioinc.com), and **Sarah Connolly**, a certified kitchen designer and a bathroom designer with Normandy Builders and Architects in Hinsdale (normandybuilders.com)—list the elements they use in spa-style bathrooms.

COLOR PALETTE

J.F.: Soft greens, golds, blues, honey; any warm, muted, clean colors.

S.C.: Asian-inspired influences with dark-chocolate brown and soft blue accents rather than classic white, which can look too sharp.

TILES, SURFACING MATERIALS

J.F.: Glass tiles for a luxurious, elegant feeling, in small 1-inch-by-1-inch shapes.

S.C.: Oversized is in. Limestone at least 13 inches by 13 inches but as large as 18 inches by 18 inches; same for the slate. I also like granite on countertops, bench tops and shelves for niches, but not on a floor. (sonomatilemakers.com)

SHOWERS

J.F.: Steam showers have gotten bigger, and in many homes they're more equivalent to a "wet" room since the shower may be built without a door, though some homeowners

still want a door for more warmth and a better steam effect. I'm getting fewer requests for lots of controls. Most people just want one big rain head, some type of hand-held body sprayer and a good showerhead. I usually put in a tiny seat, which is more the equivalent of a ledge, to conserve space. People also like niches to hold shampoos and other bath products. I like to wrap the entire shower in tile, including the ceiling if the budget permits.

S.C.: On average, showers measure 5 feet by 5 but are getting bigger. I like fold-down seats rather than stationary ones, which I cover with the same tile or granite that lines the shower. I sometimes use a whirlpool shower base that allows the homeowner to fill the shower with 4 inches of water that recirculates, massaging their feet while they're standing. I like clear glass, frameless doors.

TUBS

J.F.: What appeals are deep, 21-inch soak-

ing tubs (bainultra.com)—deeper than standard tubs—and with an air-jet feature that allows a bather to enjoy tiny effervescent air bubbles that are soothing. I've also seen tub fillers that fill from the ceiling straight into the tub. I'm doing one tub made of wood and another with wood surrounding the tub; both create a Japanese effect.

S.C.: Tubs that get filled to the rim with water and then overflow into an adjacent bin and recycle. I like sculptural tubs, such as Kohler's (kohler.com), that are placed in the center of a room like an island, if there's space, or placed against a wall and jutting into the room like a peninsula if there's less space. A flat-screen TV can be placed on a wall for viewing.

SINKS AND FAUCETS

J.F.: Square, white vessel sinks (barclayproducts.com) that sit on top of a countertop are suspended above or hung from the wall. I've also done trough sinks integrated into a countertop that's made of a warm concrete color or stainless steel. I pair my sinks with minimalist single-handle levers and faucets. I prefer polished chrome but am not opposed to brushed chrome for the shower doors. I'm also not opposed to mixing and matching different materials.

S.C.: Antique bronze metal tones for faucets as well as stainless steel. If I use a vessel sink, I'll use a glass



To create a calming ambience, designers are using simple shapes with dark woods, says Sarah Connolly (above left). At right, glass tiles covering a large shower are laid in a horizontal brick pattern, says Julie Fisher (right).

countertop with lighting underneath to highlight the sink so it becomes a piece of art. I also like under-mounted rectangular sinks and am getting away from oval sinks. I'm using more granite and glass rather than marble countertops.

CABINETRY

J.F.: Dark woods such as wenge with the cabinet a minimal slab that looks like it's floating rather than



a stationary, traditional piece that sits atop the floor and has several drawers.

S.C.: Cabinetry that resembles a piece of furniture in a dark wood with knobs or handles that are ornate, like furniture, or have only touch latches for a minimalist look.

MEDICINE CABINETS

J.F.: Robern's medicine cabinets (robern.com) hold