



Inside: Houses for nesting birds. **E3**



Hastings Tile & Bath

The silky feel of the resin material complements the sculptural design of the Chelsea tub from Hastings Tile & Bath.



Kohler

The Askew tub from Kohler is built for two, with lumbar support on each end. It looks like three rectangles stacked slightly askew.



Duravit

Matteo Thun's Onto bathtub for Duravit is clad in wood, which is waxed and oiled to prevent water damage.

DÉCOR

Bathing beauties

Sculptural free-standing tubs take center stage in master bathrooms

By Tracy Hobson Lehmann

No longer content to hug the wall, bathtubs have severed ties with showers and broken out of their boxes. It's time for the tub to stand on its own.

The shape might be sleek and sensuous or boldly geometric. It might sit on a pedestal or take cues from yesteryear's claw-foot styles.

"Every single one of them is a work of art," says San Antonio-based interior designer Mary Beth Edgerton. "Every master

bathroom I've done in the last two or three years has had a free-standing tub."

The sculptural forms turn a clunky behemoth into a focal point worthy of attention, a true bathing beauty.

"The bath(tub) has become more of the centerpiece. It's like that piece of art in the bathroom," says Linda Jennings, a spokeswoman for Victoria + Albert, a fixture manufacturer. "We've had all these bells and whistles with tubs, and I think everyone is

Tubs continues on E8



Laufen

The Il Bagno tub by Alessi for Laufen, above, is sleek and simple. Below, the silver travertine of the Papillon bathtub by Stone Forest evokes elegance and organic simplicity.



Stone Forest

How many shots? Only Chuck Connors knows

Finger hovering over the pause button on the remote, I had every member of my family ready to count. "Ready. Set. Go." Each family member quietly counted the flurry of rifle fire. I hit pause again. What'd you get?

My wife counted 13; my three daughters had 12, 14 and 13, respectively. How did I get 16? Because there was no consen-



MICHAEL O'ROURKE

sus we did it again.

"Ready. Set. Go." "How many times are we going to do this?" my wife asked with a combination of humor and mild impatience. The answer was obvious, "Until we figure it out." Duh.

It was a question my friends and I debated years ago before Little League practice. Back then we couldn't fathom

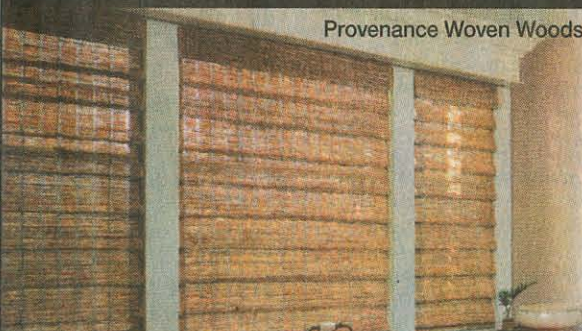
a device that would record television shows so you could watch the opening over and over again. Back then, you had one opportunity a week to count how many shots Chuck Connors blasted out of his customized Winchester rifle as he slowly walked down the main street in *The Rifleman*. God forbid someone was talking during the opening. You'd have

to wait seven more days to try to count again.

Even if you never have seen the black-and-white television show, you probably have seen the memorable opening: Tight shot on two gloved hands gripping a rifle at waist level. Left hand on the forestock. Right hand pumping the lever 12, 13 or 14 times in rapid

O'Rourke continues on E3

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HOME & GARDEN

GARDENING

10 new plants to try this year

By Kathy Huber

Like many gardeners, I've been perusing magazines and catalogs to get the buzz on promising plants for 2012. Of the dozens of introductions I could pack into our garden, here are the 10 I'm most eager to try.

Check with your nursery to see which newcomers will be available later this year. Several can be ordered.

1 'Summer Jewel Pink' salvia. All-America Selections are good bets in most any garden, and this sun-loving winner brings pink and white flower spikes from spring to frost. A hummingbird and bee attraction, it's a compact 10-24 inches tall. This *Salvia coccinea* cultivar will likely prove root-hardy in our gardens. Online sources include www.parkseed.com and www.stokesseed.com.

2 'Black Olive' ornamental pepper. Another AAS winner and possible sun companion with the pink salvia, this pepper has an upright habit with nicely draping leaves and clusters of dark purple-to-black fruit along the stems. The small peppers mature to red, a striking contrast against the dark purple foliage and bright purple flowers — pretty enough for any pot or bed.

3 'Cayennetta' pepper. A third good-looking option from the AAS that's also edible, this mildly spicy pepper produces 3- to 4-inch chile fruits on well-branched, dense, upright plants perfect for containers or well-draining beds. Both peppers are available at www.parkseed.com.



Burpee Home Gardens
Archangel angelonia

4 Archangel angelonia. I'll always find room for angelonia, a tireless, heat- and drought-tolerant bloomer in a Texas garden. Burpee Home Gardens' Archangel series boasts larger-than-usual pink, purple, raspberry and white blooms. Angelonias are root-hardy in mild winters.

5 'Wasabi' coleus. This serrated chartreuse foliage can

carry a container on its own in sun or shade. But imagine how a full skirt of the bright leaves could set off spikes of colorful blooms. 'Wasabi' is also from Burpee Home Gardens, a garden-ready plant program launched by Ball Horticultural Co. Learn about other plants and find retailers at www.burpeehomegardens.com.

6 Sombrero 'Salsa Red' echinacea. New coneflowers keep coming, and this hot number introduced by Ball Horticultural Co. is getting a lot of press. Plants are listed at www.jungseed.com and www.greatgardenplants.com.

7 Akila osteospermum. I'm not sure why osteospermum, or African daisy, is not more widely grown in our cool-season gardens. The white, lavender, purple or pink blooms are lovely spilling from large containers or covering garden ground. Ball's Akila 'Lavender' and 'Purple' are noteworthy this year.



Proven Winners
'Home Run' rose

8 'Home Run' rose. Will this newbie from Proven Winners rival its parent 'Knock Out' rose? It will be fun to see. The single blooms continue spring, summer and fall, covering disease-resistant 4-foot, rounded plants. There's a pink version, too.

9 Rockapulco 'Coral Reef' impatiens. These coral-pink double blooms, the latest in Proven Winners' Rockapulco series, should brighten any shady nook. According to PW, this annual also takes sun, but will it take Texas rays?

10 'Summer Sky' agapanthus. A favorite rhizomatous perennial in local gardens, agapanthus' large clusters of blue or white blooms are welcome in May and June. This drought-resistant, variegated lily of the Nile from Hines Growers' Bloomtastic Program is said to have a longer flowering season than other cultivars.

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Tubs all about comfort



Victoria + Albert

The egg-shaped Napoli tub from Victoria + Albert is made from a composite of resin and volcanic limestone.

Tubs from page E1

going back to that classic, free-standing, deep soak."

With the sizes as varied as the shapes, there are tubs that will fit most master bathrooms, but the nontraditional design poses a few factors to consider.

The filler, which can be jewelry for the tub, is generally a separate piece. Some are mounted on the wall, others on the floor.

Consider, too, how you will reach the faucet. "You don't want to lean over the tub or get inside the tub to turn the faucet on," says Peggy McGowen, a certified bathroom designer and owner of Kitchen & Bath Concepts in the Houston Design Center. If the tub will float away from the wall, allow enough space to clean behind it.

The deep soak is all about comfort, and the tubs aren't one-size-fits-all. So after measuring your space, head to a showroom for a test drive.

"Take your shoes off and get inside the tub. See if it's too long or too short," advises McGowen. "A short woman needs a short tub, otherwise she sinks too far down into it."

If you're looking for jets, allow enough room around your body for water to circulate. "It's the water circulation that's therapeutic, not the pounding of the water on your body," McGowen says.

Consider where the drain is placed in the tub. Some are in the middle, others might be off to one side.

"Even if it's pretty and sculptural, it has to be practical, too. People really do want to soak in these tubs," Edgerton says.

She urges clients to include a hand-held sprayer with the tub filler. "It's probably the most practical piece of other equipment you need," she says. It makes cleaning and shampooing easier, and it's good for rinsing

and aromatherapy from bath salts or oils.

Designers caution that building codes in most communities don't condone chandeliers over bathtubs.

Prices for the tubs start at \$2,500 to \$4,000. Depending on materials and shapes, prices can climb into five figures. Many free-standing tubs are made from resin, acrylic or a composite of natural material and resin.

Manmade materials often weigh less and offer more design flexibility than porcelain or cast iron, and they retain heat, keeping the bath cozy longer.

Wall-mounted faucets typically cost less than floor-mounted fillers, says Beth Bryan Maley, a sales associate with Morrison Supply, a plumbing supplier and showroom. Brushed-nickel fixtures start at about \$1,800.

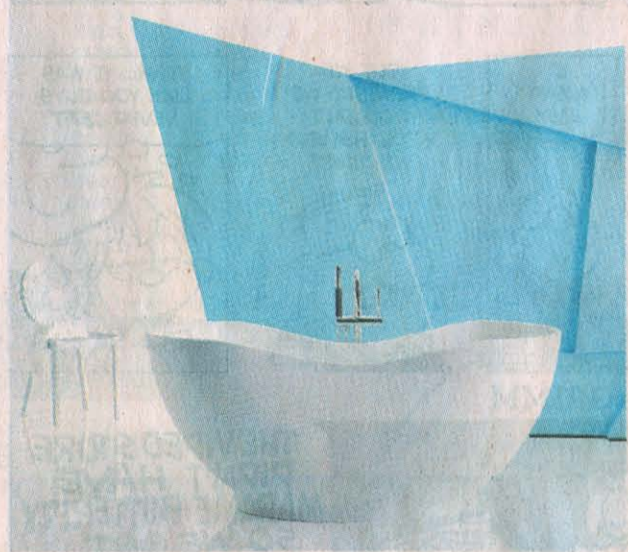
Because most free-standing tubs don't have a rim, you'll need a place for a towel, a book, maybe a candle or a wine glass. It can be as simple as a wall hook for a towel, a niche in the wall or an inconspicuous wall-mounted shelf.

"More often than not, we put a table in front of the tub," Edgerton says, adding that the table can be another piece of jewelry for the room. Pair an acrylic table with a contemporary tub or a simple wooden pedestal table in a traditional room.

Just don't draw too much attention from the tub.

"Any time you put a free-standing tub in a bathroom, it makes a statement. It makes the room sing," Edgerton says.

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Kohler

The oval shape of the Abrazo tub from Kohler was inspired by clay pottery. It's made of Lithocast, a solid-surface material that looks like stone but feels warm.

off bubble bath. To enjoy your time in the tub, keep the lighting soft and simple, conducive to a spa feel. Recessed can lights on dimmers can provide adequate read-

ing light. Washing a wall behind the tub with light creates a peaceful setting. Colored LED lights can offer a chromatherapy experience to go along with the hydrotherapy

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