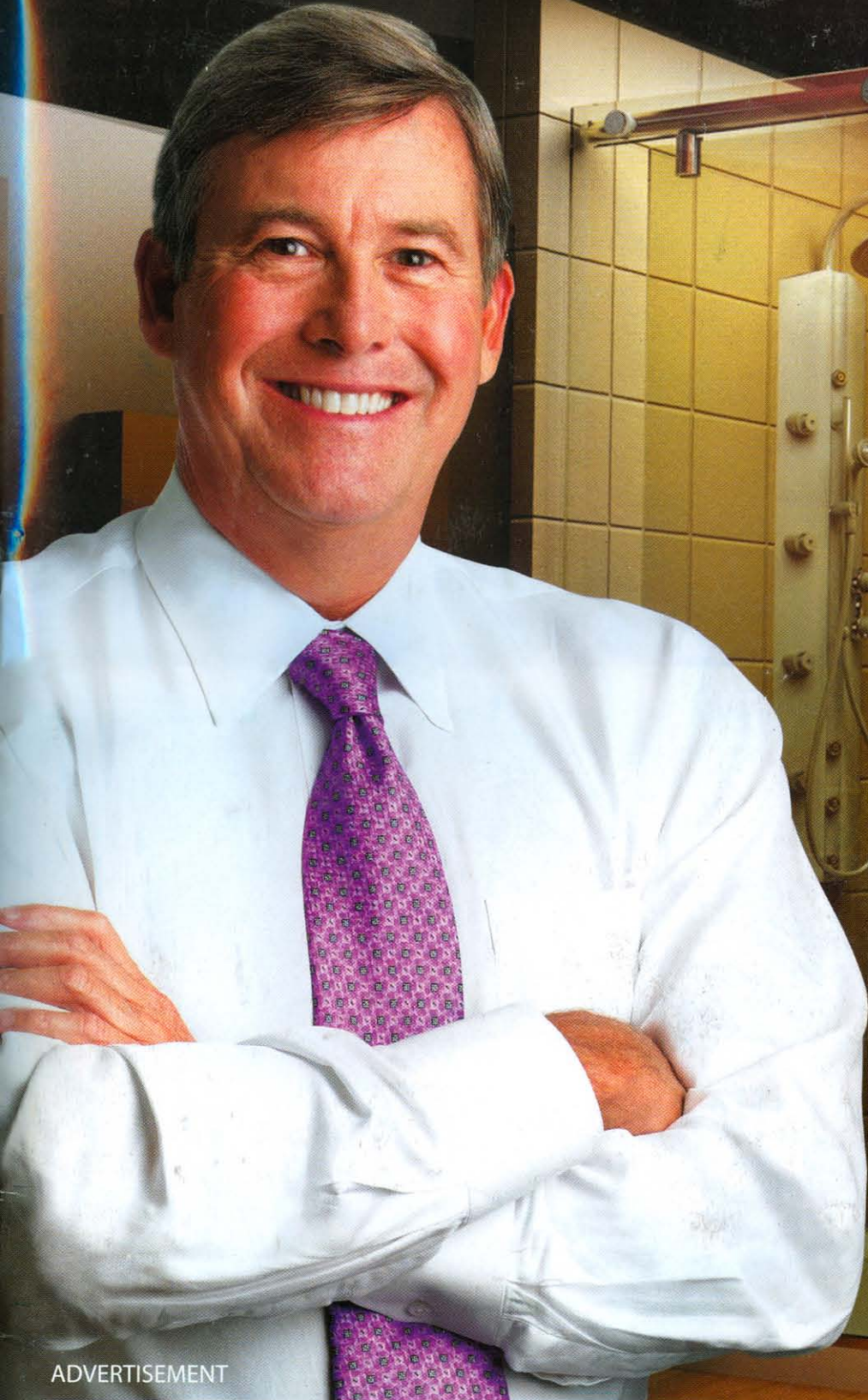


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Get inspired

# The hottest trends in kitchen and bath

BY LINDA JENNINGS

Decorative plumbing specialist

This year's design trends are more inspired than ever. The current economic conditions have created a new breed of consumers — no longer an impulse buy, there is much more thought going into home purchases. Those in a buying position are investing in products that address a wide array of needs, including emotional and physical well-being, sustainable living and innovation.

Informed consumers are visiting showrooms and retail outlets to achieve the newest looks in everything from tubs and faucets to sinks, decorative hardware and even shower systems. Today's consumers are reinvesting in their homes and they continue to look for products that help them reach personal fulfillment.

Here's a look at some of the hottest trends leading the kitchen and bath design craze. Highlighting the style network is the evolution of green products. As consumers get more sophisticated about sustainability, so do the products with a new wave of materials raising the bar on eco-friendly product design.

On the style front, retro is white hot with hardware, faucet finishes and tubs all going white for a 1970s throwback. Multi-generational design continues to be the fastest-growing bath trend, as more and more households need to equip for multiple generations. Hardware inspired by designers and seamless sink innovations are new to the design front with rave reviews. And showering just got more illuminating with LED lighted shower systems.

Following are some of the newest trends making headlines in plumbing.

## Trend #1 — Green evolves

Sustainability is not a trend but a new way of living. More and more consumers are seeking ways to reduce negative impacts on the environment, and their product purchases are reflecting this forethought. They are educated and very conscientious. But they also have impeccable taste and high design standards... so it's no longer enough to just go "green."

To keep up with the diverse offerings in the marketplace and the growing sophistication of the green buyer,

products today need to have a serious design edge when it comes to sustainability. It's all about re-thinking green — kicking it up a notch and giving the consumer luxury choices. The result is a new wave of eco products that are extremely creative and will surely have consumers green with envy!

A number of manufacturers are experimenting with mixed sustainable materials like the striking Elliptical soaking bath, which combines stainless steel with bamboo pole skirting for an eclectic look rooted in texture and style. Unlike many other engineered materials, the stainless steel vessel shell is 100% recyclable with-

Diamond Spa's stainless steel oval tub with bamboo skirting and Lenova's bamboo vessel sink.



out degradation, making it fully "sustainable" and a true champion for the environment.

Bamboo sinks are also getting sophisticated with new shapes and sizes. Featuring organic warmth and natural beauty, these surprisingly durable sinks can easily withstand the rigors of daily use. Known for its peak density, color clarity and sustainability, bamboo is an undeniably green product that fits naturally into both the kitchen and bathroom environments. Products made from this renewable resource are a fabulous way to combine responsible living with fashionable style. It's green with a creative twist.

Leading tub companies are turning to volcanic limestone mixes to create minimalist styles that are sustainable. As a result, there is a new wave of seamless, solid-surface organic bathtubs that excel in modern design with their contoured bottoms and clean, sleek lines. As the stone-rich alternative to both cast iron and acrylic, the tubs are cast in one seamless piece that won't crack or flex.

The high-performance

materials are naturally insulating, durable and stain resistant. The tub is warm to the touch, water stays warm longer and there are no nasty cold shocks when getting into the tub. The building industry is advancing to a new level of sustainable awareness and bath manufacturers are meeting those needs with tubs that are superior in design. Ecology-minded man-

ufacturers are shipping the baths in recycled cardboard on pallets made of reclaimed wood, with strapping made from recycled bottles.

Other designers are reclaiming stainless steel and copper to craft freestanding bathing vessels and door pulls with fabulous high-end design results. Metal delivers superb quality and durability, guaranteeing no boundaries when it comes to design requirements. This allows engineering teams the flexibility of creating the most design-savvy products the market has to offer.

Even customizable bath furniture has gone stylish and is offered in materials that minimize pollution, con-

serve energy and reduce waste. Sustainable woods like Clear Carmelized Bamboo, an architectural plywood made from 100% rapidly renewable bamboo, provide green options in cutting-edge vanity designs. Lyptus hardwood products are also an excellent option when selecting an exotic species grown to sustainable forest certification standards. Lyptus offers all the benefits of a tropical hardwood but is eco-friendly.

As concern for the earth has clearly become a key issue with consumers, designers are heeding the call. Some companies will even custom create door hardware on request to meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification standards, the rating system devised by the United States Green Building Council.

More and more products are being created from natural materials. Leather has made a huge comeback as renewable materials in organic forms fuse to create eco-friendly kitchen and bath products. Employing organic materials, quality construction and timeless design are keys to offering smart, ultra-luxe and green products that consumers are craving. Sustainable design is here to stay. It's not a passing phase — it's a revolution!

According to The American Society of Interior Design (ASID), "Clearly we are on our way toward adopting sustainability on all levels of our projects, our businesses, our lives — something is happening and it's both an exciting and challenging opportunity for our industry. Individuals and business leaders are making decisions every day that support the economy and lighten their environmental footprint toward attaining sustainable results."

The consumer has evolved when it comes to green living. And so manufacturers really have to raise the bar when it comes to de-

(Turn to Style... page 42.)

MTI Whirlpools' Elise tub



## Tracking down the trends

For more information on the trends mentioned here go to:

### Atlas Homewares

800-799-6755

[www.atlashomewares.com](http://www.atlashomewares.com)

### Diamond Spas

720-864-9115

[www.diamondspas.com](http://www.diamondspas.com)

### Lenova

877-733-1098

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### Victoria + Albert

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[www.vandabaths.com](http://www.vandabaths.com)



## K/B trends change, but... Style never goes out of style

(Continued from page 40.)

sign. It's not enough to just be green — products have to be eco-licious!

### Trend #2 – Multi-generational bath design

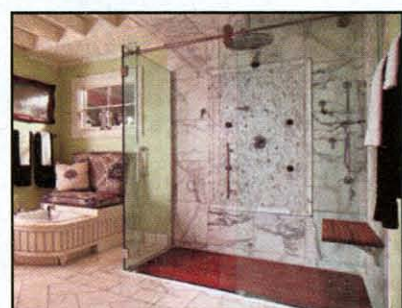
There's no doubt that multi-generational design is one of the fastest-growing trends in today's housing industry. As more and more people discover the benefits that smart planning affords to those of all age groups and abilities, a rising demand is emerging for products that combine style and safety, beauty and comfort, practicality and versatility.

Multi-generational design need not be a foreign concept. It is, after all, what good design should be. Multi-generational design has applications throughout the house but is particularly important in the bathroom. A well-thought-out bathroom can easily accommodate the needs of young children, older adults and those with disabilities. And while there are many practical considerations that play an important role in the design process — including safety, space constraints, comfort and ease of use — being “sensible” doesn't mean the bathroom has to look utilitarian.

Quite the opposite, in fact. Manufacturers of bath products are now finding new ways to infuse style into what was once a strictly institutional area of bathroom design. The results are something style-savvy consumers would want to have in their home — even without the added bonus of multi-generational benefits. MTI Whirlpools leads the way with a line of bath products that open the door to accessibility. From low-profile shower



MTI Whirlpools' walk-in tub (above) and low-profile shower base with Teutonic enclosure, teak shower tray and teak seat.



bases to easy-entrance tubs, MTI has an extensive collection of products, accessories and options that allow all family members to enjoy a bathroom environment that looks great while being universally accommodating.

Industry insiders are gearing up to accommodate this trend, which is expected to increase exponentially over the next several decades. The oldest Baby Boomers will celebrate their 65th birthdays in 2011. According to government projections, by 2030 nearly 26% of the U.S. population will be age 65 or older, compared with just 17% today. This is creating a change in the profile of the typical American family. A survey from AARP reported that the number of multi-generational households has grown from 5 million in 2000 to 6.2 million in 2008. Nearly a quarter of baby boomers expect that their parents or in-laws will move in with them — and half of those who anticipate that living arrangement are excited about it. Experts predict that four-generation households will become more common as more Baby Boomers reach maturity and life expectancy increases. People are planning ahead now and looking for homes that will lend themselves to future demands of the multi-generational lifestyle.

### Trend #3 – Stainless in the spotlight

The trend toward stainless steel for kitchens and baths is stronger than ever and products like Lenova's Entertainer Sink are taking center stage with innovative new features and a multi-tasking design style. The Entertainer bar/island sink features a drain board, wine cooler and three condiment trays that can be used for olives, a selection of nuts, sliced lemons or whatever you wish to serve. A two-piece cutting board covers the unit when not in use, providing additional counter space. The kitchen is the hub of the home and stainless products provide function and durability while making a modern statement. We're also seeing stainless kitchen and bath sinks evolve into a full range of shapes and styles, like the kidney-shaped bath sink and even a stainless steel apron-front farm sink for the ultimate in transitional style.

And when we talk about stainless, there is no doubt that less is more. Seamless drains are aesthetically superior, as they create a seamless modern look, but they also do away with the grime and eyesore of drains and glue. The new PermaClean drain system from Lenova has a stream-



Lenova's Entertainer bar sink (left) and PermaClean drain system sink.

lined modern look and an innovative drain design that provides a stylish and sanitary solution to the traditional kitchen sink. Disposer and drain seams disappear for a smooth and sanitary high-end look. No seams mean no dirty water or debris that breed bacteria. Drain kits become obsolete.

A fundamental shift in sink design, the PermaClean drain system features removable splashguards that are dishwasher safe, and strainer baskets that seal to both the drain fitting and the garbage disposer. The sink line complements any décor with premium 16-gauge 304 stainless and a light European brushed finish; fully undercoated plus quality sound pads combine to insulate and reduce excess noise and vibration.

### Trend #4 – Retro is white hot

Bellbottoms and patent leather are so in vogue, and leading designers are finding a renewed interest in funky-kitsch designs of the '70's. Remember The Beatles' *White Album* and go-go boots? This groovy trend is spilling over to fixtures, faucets, sinks, tubs and



Atlas Homewares' high gloss white Successi hardware (above) and white leather Zanzibar hardware.



hardware. We're seeing a new wave of white — white faucet finishes, white hardware, white leather. Composite bath sinks in matte white is where elegance meets edge, combining minimalist design with the beauty of solid surface construction. Atlas Homewares stepped up to the “hot” plate with refreshing new lines of white leather and high gloss white knobs and pulls.



Think minimalist with options for these collections: choose from whisper-soft curves to dramatic right angles; geometric forms that are the hallmarks of modernism. A nod to the 70s, this trend will have you getting your old vinyl records out.

### Trend #5 – Partnering with designers

The trend today is about infusing products with high style and so it's no surprise that some of the most successful companies are collaborating with leading architects and designers to inspire product design. And the results are electrifying. Matthew Quinn, one of the nation's leading designers in the luxury kitchen and bath design industry, and MTI Whirlpools recently embarked on a design partnership. The two have collaborated

The Matthew Quinn Collection by Reveal Designs



on the design and development of a new luxury collection of baths, sinks and bath furniture.

Reveal Designs also recently partnered with Quinn to design a new hardware line. Reveal and Quinn pair decades of experience and a strong national marketing and distribution campaign throughout U.S. and international markets. The partnership has added new dimension and perspective to the cutting-edge modern aesthetics of the Reveal Designs portfolio. The synergy of respected branding, common thinking and inspired design concepts allow for a continued fresh approach to architectural door and cabinet hardware designs.

### Trend #6 – Shed some light

Creative forms of lighting have taken the spotlight from the most inspired manufacturers of bath products, the most trendy of which is LED. Why? Because LED (light-emitting diodes) brings fun, function (Turn to Hot new trends, page 46.)



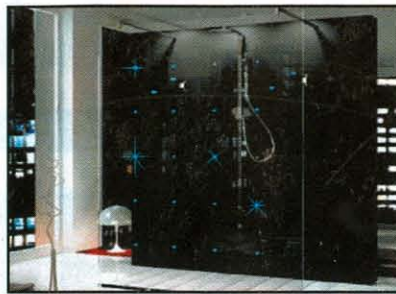
## Hot new trends

(Continued from page 42.)

and beauty to home decor. It's also economical, safe, maintenance-free and lasts for decades. Novellini's new Sparkle shower screen is elevating the bath experience to a level not before achieved in bath design. As a stand-alone shower screen with embedded LED blue lights, Sparkle lights up the shower experience. Part of the Elysium Collection, Sparkle is an eye-catching piece of art as well as a fully functional shower.

### Trend #7 – Personal style!

The bath continues to evolve as a private refuge; an escape from the rigors of life's daily challenges. It's no wonder that homeowners are seeking to personalize this space to the max. Today it's all in the details! Bath accessories fill the bill and are at the forefront of cutting-edge design. Tub and bath shapes are getting more simplified while the accessories and amenities are evolving, raising



A huge hit at last spring's Kitchen and Bath Industry Show in Chicago — Novellini's Sparkle LED shower screen.

the bar on customization. MTI Whirlpools offers everything from teak bath inserts to floating hydro-remotes. Carefully chosen items such as these make any bath spill over with personal style. It's all about creating a space that can evolve based on our



MTI Whirlpools' Petra tub with teak tub seat.

moods and needs of the moment. So get inspired and check out a lifestyle of options that will wash away the stresses of everyday life.

### Trend #8 – Bring on the glam!

It's all about glamour. Let's face it, with homeowners caught in the economic doldrums of recent years, more and more consumers are looking to create a major splash for a minimal investment. Many still desire a Hollywood home despite severe budget restrictions. Show them how to live like a movie star with a few minor touches. Add bling with striking stylish hardware. We all know



The Crystal and Crystal Pave hardware by Atlas Homewares.

that simply changing out knobs and pulls on tired cabinets can create an entirely new, luxurious and sensational look. Look for quality products without the high cost.

### Trend #9 – Warm up bath design

Why settle for cold, damp towels when you can cuddle up with a sooth-



CN011A Towel Warmer by Vogue UK.

ing, warm towel after every shower or bath? Add a little luxury to your bath design with a towel warmer and keep your towels fresh and dry all year long. Not only will they be dry and warm when you use them, but they will also stay mildew free. The newest towel warmers out today exceed expectations in quality and craftsmanship. These modern towel warmers are designed to create a light and open atmosphere in any modern home. Consumers are drawn to unique designs that feature flowing shapes, gentle curves or exotic flair that make the ultimate style statement.

### Trend #10 – The future is clear

In an age when consumer confidence is low, the future is clear. It's all about being transparent! And that trend has transferred over to the luxury kitchen and bath market. We're seeing bath furniture crafted out of clear glass, vessel sinks hand blown out of glass that echo minimalism, and clear acrylic Lucite bath accessories that infuse a spirit of pure optimism! ■

Linda Jennings is president of Jennings & Company, a public relations, advertising and marketing agency, specializing exclusively in the decorative plumbing and luxury hardware industry. Throughout a 20-year tenure, she has worked with the most significant editors and journalists in the consumer home market, identifying trends and providing newsworthy products. Based in Sarasota, Fla., her agency represents some of the most progressive manufacturers in the kitchen & bath industry. Jennings is also a member of the DPHA and writes for their monthly NEWSLEAK newsletter.



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