

SUMMER HOME

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WHAT'S INSIDE

Brick: Innovations make it enduring and easy

BY SHEILA GARRETT
Special to the Record-Eagle

Durability, visual appeal, low maintenance and continuous design innovations are among the reasons many of today's home builders and renovators are choosing brick for exteriors, trim and accessories.

Ted Roehrich, salesperson and in-house mason at The Concrete Service in Traverse City, said that brick enhances the monetary value of a home while adding to its aesthetic value.

"You can just forget about it," Roehrich said about maintenance worries.

Jeff Thomack, office manager at the Western Concrete Products showroom in Traverse City said that permanence along with easy care are the main reasons that people choose brick.

Roehrich has noticed an ongoing increase in home construction and improvement in the post-9/11 world.

"There has been a real surge of interest in the home. Home means more to people now," he said. "Also, real estate is more valuable, since there is less confidence in the stock market." The Concrete Service supplies bricks and blocks. New manufacturing techniques have multiplied the choices offered to clients.

The Richtex VistaSeries, for example, produces 150 different styles, colors and

shapes of bricks and brick pavers. Each brick is available in standard, queen and oversize. Needs for special sizes can also be accommodated.

Cultured Stone veneer products aims to replicate natural stone at a lower cost and are comparatively lightweight for easy installation.

"When full thickness masonry is not possible, there are thin masonry veneer options available in both residential and commercial buildings," said Roehrich. "When remodeling a structure, thin veneer is usually the answer if no brick ledge is there. The appearance of full thickness masonry can be achieved without all of the weight."

Masonry veneer products can be cut to frame doors or windows, and can be shaped to conform to arches. Cultured Stone accessories, such as hearthstones, capstones and sills, come in a range of colors.

Also available through Cultured Stone is a comput-

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Record-Eagle/John L. Russell
Traverse City's Western Concrete Service has, along with their showroom, a variety of pavers and bricks landscaped outside so customers can visualize what their project could look like. The latest trend with bricks and pavers is a weathered look that is accomplished by tumbling them.



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Knock on wood: One-of-a-kind cabinetry

BY DANA GEORGE
Special to the Record-eagle

They need to be durable, yet attractive. Homeowners want them to be stylish, but not dated.

They're the cabinets in people's homes, and in any given week, they're liable to see more action than the outfield at Wrigley Stadium. We open them, shut them, slam them, bump into them, and expect them to hold up under the rigors of our abuse.

"It's very important that your cabinets be durable, especially if you have a family. They're definitely going to get beat up and you don't want to have to replace them in five or ten years," said Vicki Hiser, who along with her husband David, owns Norman's Custom Cabinetry & Flooring in

Williamsburg.

There are cabinets available in styles that will fit with any home décor — ranging from sleek contemporary Euro-style to Arts and Crafts, Victorian, Shaker and Colonial. Depending on your budget, you can choose semi-custom or custom-made cabinets, refinish existing cabinetry or just add new hardware.

Custom cabinetry is more expensive than semi-custom cabinetry available through home improvement stores, but it has the advantage of maximizing the use of space and being tailored to your exact needs.

"People come in with pictures torn from magazines and things they've drawn on cocktail napkins," said Jeff Smith, owner of Whittler Woodcraft Rustic Studio in

Acme. "People have some of the best ideas of what they want in their homes."

Smith designs and creates what he calls "rustic, woodland pieces," a skill he cultivated shortly after graduating from college.

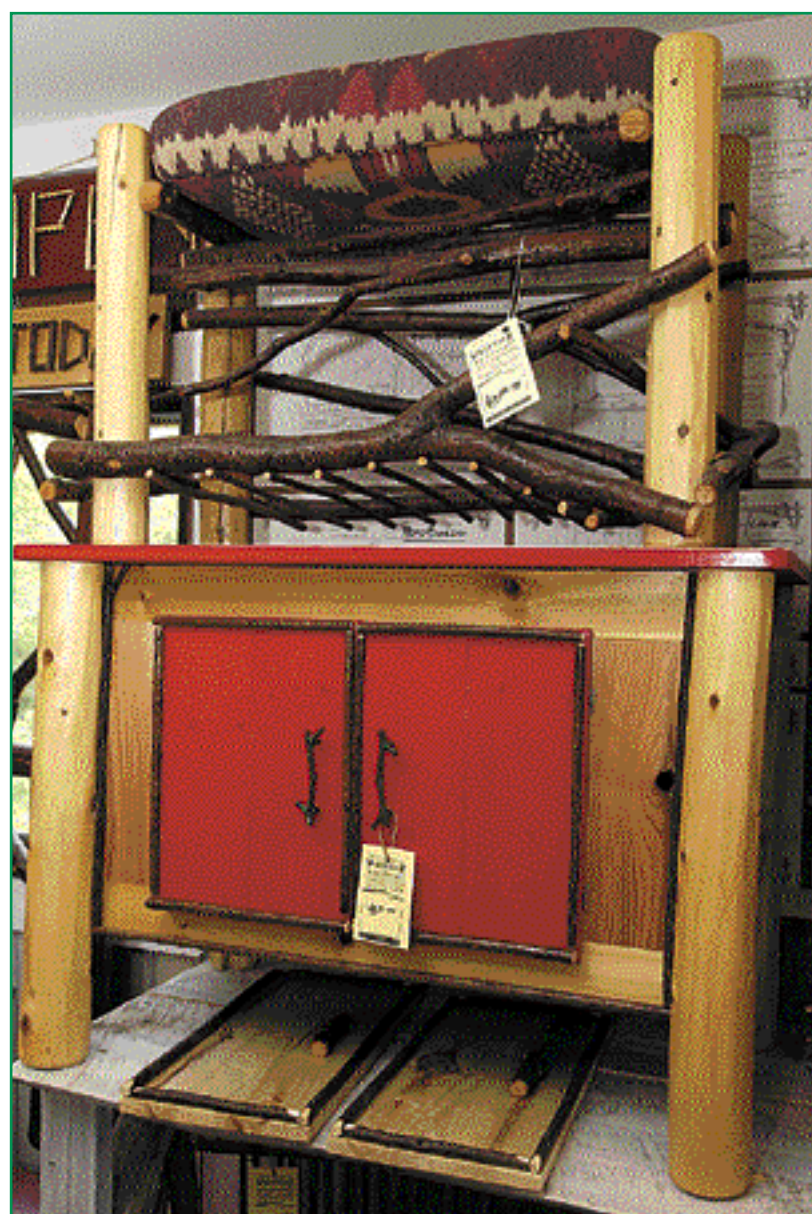
"I went to college, moved out West and had no furniture. I started building out of necessity," he said. What Smith came up with were pieces constructed of cordwood and throwaway pieces like For Sale signs.

"People would come over and say, 'Wow, this is really cool,'" Smith recalled.

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Record-Eagle/John L. Russell

Above right: An end table sits atop a storage cabinet. They are made of pine and oak. Below: At left is a television stand and at right is a wine cabinet.



Record-Eagle/John L. Russell
Jeff Smith works with wood to produce cabinetry, chairs, stools and benches out of his Acme shop.