

# Floor ‘em with style: Options are plentiful when choosing bathroom tile

BY TRICIA HOOCHUNG-PEREA  
 Copley News Service

Choosing a floor for the smallest room in the house can be a big decision. When decorating the bathroom, the choices are limited only by budget and personal preference.

Ron Brake, a flooring installer based in Petersburg, Ill., said homeowners usually choose carpet, vinyl flooring or ceramic tile.

“I see a lot of carpet in bathrooms,” said Brake. “It’s very nice because it’s warm, soft and probably the least expensive.”

He noted, however, that carpeting has drawbacks when used in the bathroom. Carpet’s tendencies to mold, stain and retain odor make it a poor choice for bathrooms used by small children or those not vigilant about moisture.

“If you go with carpeting, go with something mold- and mildew-resistant,” said Brake. “They

now make a bathroom carpet with a special backing.”

Vinyl is popular, especially among do-it-yourselfers. “It’s probably the best choice,” Brake says. “A lot of do-it-yourselfers can do a vinyl peel-and-stick floor. They can save on labor.”

Other advantages include easy cleaning, a wide variety of patterns and water resistance.

“But the downfall is that vinyl tile has joints so

water can get between (the pieces),” said Brake. “It will eventually curl up with time.”

Brake also noted that less expensive vinyl has a tendency to tear easily.

Ceramic tiles also are available in a variety of patterns and can mimic more expensive materials such as natural stone. Glazed ceramic tiles are also easy to clean.

“Ceramic tile is a good choice,” said Brake. “It can last a lifetime, so it’s a big commitment.”

Ceramic tiles offer many benefits, including durability, easy care, scratch and fire resistance and water resistance. Among ceramics, porcelain tiles are particularly hearty and tend to be the same color beneath the surface, so they don’t show white spots when they chip.

“With ceramic tiles, you can create your own designs and be creative (with arrangement),” he said.



CNS Photo by Amanda Brewer

Vinyl is a popular choice for bathroom flooring — it’s durable, easy to install and comes in numerous patterns.

“They can be put on walls, surrounds, tubs, countertops — anywhere.”

Brake said that consumers choose a tile that has texture since a slick-surfaced tile can create a slipping hazard. The disadvantages of ceramic tiles include non-resilience, and being

hard and cold underfoot.

Ceramic tiles can be warmed with radiant heating systems. Hydronic or electric systems beneath flooring material are invisible. These systems are usually professionally installed.

For non-do-it-yourselfers,

the cost of professional installation can be the most important factor in the final cost. Ceramic tile installation is the most time-consuming and therefore the most expensive.

The materials’ costs vary widely. Carpet costs run from less than \$1 per square

foot and up to \$5 per square foot. Similarly, vinyl floors often run between \$1 and \$5 per square foot. Ceramic tile usually costs around \$1 to \$6 per square foot. Check with your flooring salesperson to see if the specific flooring is appropriate for bathroom use.

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## Pamper your patio furniture

Some of you just don’t put forth the same effort into cleaning our outdoor furniture as we do with our indoor furniture. After all, it lives outside and endures the elements.

Nonsense, said Gary McCray of Laneventure, an outdoor furniture manufacturer. He offers these tips for prolonging the life of your outdoor furniture:

■ For aluminum, apply a coat of liquid wax at the start of each season. And clean with water and liquid detergent twice a season.

■ For steel and iron, apply liquid wax at least once a year. Clean occasionally. If rust appears, scrub with a

wire brush and touch up the paint to prevent rust from spreading. In the winter, cover furniture or bring inside.

■ For natural wicker, lightly spray with water every few weeks and bring inside in late fall. For synthetic wicker, hose off and clean with a mild detergent and water. It can be left outdoors all year.

■ For wood, apply a linseed or hardwood oil finish to preserve color. For stained or painted wood, apply several new coats of stain or paint every year or two.

## Dim all the lights

Here’s something that will knock the daylights out of your house.

Solatube International has a dimmer option for its popular line of tubular skylights that will regulate the amount of sunlight directed into dark rooms, hallways or bathrooms.

“Many people want natural light in their bedrooms,” said Bill Powell, Solatube’s customer service manager.

With the dimmer, he said, “you can turn it off completely or just soften it.”

Usually mounted on roofs, the Solatube captures direct and ambient natural light and channels it through a reflective system to a diffuser on a room’s ceiling. Operated from a wall switch, the dimmer’s electric motor controls a “butterfly” diaphragm in the channel that regulates the amount of light. One switch can be used for several dimmers.

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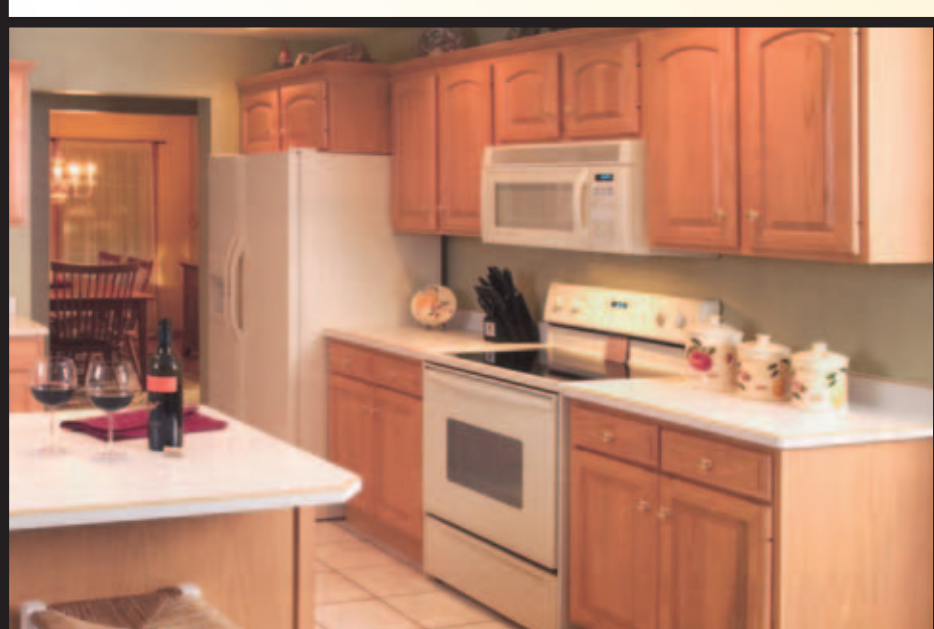
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