

# How To Redecorate Your Bathroom

By Carolyn Porter

By all accounts, the bathroom can be a dreary little space that is functional but not much else. It can be, but it doesn't have to be.

These days, bathrooms are getting as much decorating attention as living rooms and bedrooms, and deservedly so. What better way to unwind after a chaotic day than with a warm bubble bath in a beautiful room? Bathroom redecorating does not have to entail tearing down walls and putting expensive skylights into your ceiling. A little sprucing up with a few warm touches here and there can easily and affordably make your ordinary bathroom beautiful.

Michelle Warnken, a certified kitchen and bathroom designer, says there are a number of ways to fix up a bathroom without spending a fortune. "If you're on a limited budget, you don't have to start ripping your bathroom apart," she says. "You can redo your vanity top and faucet, change your mirror, and add decorative lighting. You can change your shower curtain, add new towels, and change your toilet tissue holder. There are little things you can do that make a big difference."

Warnken said if your bathtub is in good shape but getting a little dingy, you don't have to rip it out and put in a new one. Instead, there are companies that will come in and refinish it, giving it a new look without the expense and hassle of a complete replacement. Check your local telephone directory under "Tubs – Refinishing" for services in your area.

Another common bathroom complaint, Warnken says, is grout. "If your grout is dirty or discolored, there are cleaners available that will fix it," she says. "If it's the actual color of the grout you don't like and you don't mind spending the time and using a little elbow grease, you can chisel out the old grout and re-grout it a new color."

What about the common problem of the small bathroom? You know, the one that is scarcely bigger than a large closet? Not to worry. Warnken said there are ways to make small bathrooms look and feel bigger without having to knock down entire walls. "If you're trying to make a small space look bigger, keep the colors as light as possible," she says. "You might also consider using a glass shower door instead of a curtain. Glass shower doors don't create the kind of barrier that shower curtains do."

Mirrors, she said, can also make small spaces look larger. Small bathrooms frequently have limited or no storage space, and for that problem, Warnken said modern bathroom furnishings can come to the rescue. There are new medicine cabinets on the market that range in depth from four to eight inches -- big enough to hold rolls of toilet paper. There are also medicine cabinets with built-in electrical outlets, so you can plug in your electric toothbrush or razor and set it right on the cabinet shelf, which means less clutter on your countertop. The standard "over-the-john" cabinets are also widely used to add more storage space to a small bathroom.

The pedestal sink, Warnken claims, can be a blessing and a curse in a small bathroom. "If you go with a pedestal sink in a small bathroom, it gives you the sense that you have more space, because it takes up less room on the floor," she says. "But that will limit your storage space, because you don't have that cabinet area under the sink."

Warnken says she has seen many trends in bathroom decorating come and go, but one of the current trends is the use of glass tile, which has depth to it and comes in a variety of colors and hues. Vessel sinks, which are essentially bowls that sit on the countertop, are also popular.

Another new trend in bathroom decorating is etched glass. Guy Kass, owner of Kass Glassworks in South Orange, NJ, says more and more people are asking him for etched mirrors and glass for their bathrooms. "Etching can give your bathroom a unique, personal look," Kass says. "I've done people's monogram on glass cabinet doors. I've done a detailed etched design on a bathroom window. Once a customer asked me to etch flowers onto 12 individual mirrors she had put into her bathroom's French door. It looked great."

Kass said he thinks the growing appeal of etched glass is the way it makes the etched piece the focal point of the bathroom. "You tend to not notice a bathroom's small flaws when you're looking at an etched border on a medicine cabinet," he says.