

IN-HOME SPA

Expert design tips to create the ultimate at-home spa bath experience

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Inspired by resort adventures, today's homeowners are looking for ways to bring the spa bath experience home. Spa baths typically feature a calming color palette; mood lighting; frameless glass doors and minimal hardware; and the integration of smart technology that allows for remote and customizable control of water pressure, temperature and more.

Mark Danuser, president of Tatum Brown Custom Homes, shares some of the most coveted products and trends in spa bath design.

Get smart with technology

Showers, fixtures and tubs are much more technologically advanced today than they were even just a few years ago. Now homeowners have the option of incorporating high-tech features such as heated tubs and shower systems that provide a more knocked-out spa-like shower.

Popular brands like Kohler offer products that incorporate mood lighting (called chromatherapy), play music, and adjust water settings and pressure, all of which can be done via touch screen or smartphone app.

Go sleek with fixtures and plumbing

Green building code requirements have prompted the popularity of low-flow plumbing fixtures. Aesthetically, sleeker fixtures are in high demand, and cooler materials such as brushed steel or stainless steel are the most requested, Danuser says.

With the popularity of clean lines and transitional/contemporary home design styles, many brands and larger retail stores are rolling out more modern bath fixtures, he adds.

Incorporate mood lighting

Energy-efficient LED lighting packages are popular, as are shower systems that feature user-controlled chromatherapy, a lighting technology that uses color and brightness to set a certain mood. From starting off the day with a shower filled with energetic lighting to wrapping up a long day with a soothing soak in the tub, lighting can really enhance the spa bath experience.

Take it up a notch with tile

Sleek, spa-like tiles in neutral colors, arranged in modern or contemporary patterns, provide an interesting focal point for the shower or bath. Tatum Brown's clients largely prefer to use more durable materials in the bath and shower, and Danuser says he has seen a rise in popularity for porcelain because it's not as porous as natural stone.

"Today, these more durable materials are available in larger dimension pieces, which allow for sleeker applications in the shower and on the floor," he explains.

Calculated countertops

For their counters and vanities, homeowners want surfaces made from "genius" materials, which are dense, man-made products, quartz and glass blends that are more durable and have a longer life cycle than other natural stone. For instance, the look and feel of Calcutta marble is now available in a denser option that is easier to clean and more resistant to build-up than the original stone.

Hardware goes minimalist

"The trend is minimalist," Danuser says. "Less is more. Smaller knobs, thumb tabs and blending in so the hardware doesn't compete with the aesthetics are popular. Spa bath hardware is about functionality. And often we find that homeowners want to eliminate as much hardware as possible."

Design considerations

Spa bath design has grown in popularity, and there are more products and technology options than ever before. When designing a spa bath, Danuser says there are several things to consider, and these are some of the most common issues:

- Are the shower heads the correct height?
- What natural stones should be used that aren't so porous that they require heavy maintenance?
- Where should the windows be placed to allow for the greatest amount of natural light?



Homeowners now prefer sleek fixtures and glass-enclosed showers.
Photo courtesy of Tatum Brown Custom Homes