



# Greening a Bathroom

BY DENNIS ALLEN

Photo by Megan Bierle

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**B**athrooms, along with kitchens, are the most expensive spaces to construct in a home, because of the plumbing needed, the greater density of lighting, and numerous appliances. To create a sustainable bathroom, it must be energy-efficient, use minimal water, be comfortable, non-toxic, quiet, and basically maintenance-free.

California codes keep nudging all new and remodel construction to be more sustainable. Consequently, any remodeling project today triggers upgrading ALL plumbing fixtures throughout the home or business. The most recent state standards are: 1.8 gallons per flush for toilets, 1.2 gallons per minute (gpm) for bathroom faucets, and 1.8 gpm for showerheads, giving California the toughest standards of any US state. For comparison, these flows are about a quarter or less of what was standard three to four decades ago.

Not only are these standards saving hundreds of billions of gallons of water each year, but also lots of energy and greenhouse gas emissions, since 19 percent of energy consumed in California is used to pump, transport, treat, and heat or cool water.

Selecting an efficient and effective showerhead has become easier in the last decade due to the Federal WaterSense program. To carry the WaterSense label, a showerhead must list its flow rate, which must be below the maximum allowable federal standard, and meet strict user satisfaction standards. A popular WaterSense model by Niagara, rated at 1.5 gpm and receiving stellar customer reviews, costs only about \$8.

A promising development that cuts water consumption even more is the atomizer mist technology. Showerheads using this approach disperse water through millions of microscopic droplets into an effective wet area while saving 70 percent of water. Similarly, with sink faucets, the fine mist produced is a 98 percent reduction in water use, with no loss in functionality.

Controlling humidity in bathrooms is key to promoting health. Good natural ventilation (operable windows) as well as effective air-moving equipment, avoids mold, mildew, and rot. A good bathroom fan needs to move about 150 cubic feet of air per minute while having a noise rating of one sone or less, making it virtually unnoticeable.

The leading green-building thinking today emphasizes all-electric homes, where the loads are minimal, and the power needed is produced on- or off-site by the sun or wind. LED lighting and super-efficient equipment keep loads to a minimum without sacrificing performance. Water can also be heated by solar electric panels or directly by solar thermal panels.

Water and heat can be additionally saved by on-demand hot water delivery. At the push of a button, a pump turns on, rapidly bringing hot water to faucets while pushing the cold in-line water out into the cold-water lines, rather than wasting it down the drain.

Good insulation, high-performance windows, non-toxic materials, and avoiding carpeting are additional strategies to improve sustainability in bathrooms and are even more important for the entire house.

Savings on water and electricity are often easily calculable. Putting a price on good health is not easy but for most of us it is priceless.

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Photo by Jim Bartsch.

# BLING TO ZING

*Bathroom Design Trends for the 2020s*

BY LESLIE A. WESTBROOK

Whether you're building a new house, remodeling, or "freshening up" an existing bathroom, here are some cool new design trends ranging from unique vanities and lighting to faucets in new tones to unexpected leather drawer pulls. Modern technology also takes a bow, with devices from simple, like heated bidet toilet seats (Japan excels at this), to advanced, like mirrors with built-in speakers and smart monitors that check water flow and leaks.

On the design front, floating vanities and wall-mounted toilets make cleaning a breeze. Think vertical instead of horizontal for shower tiles with a fresh look.

## RUSTIC CHIC AND MODERN

### Fixtures & Surfaces

Combine the warmth and textures of concrete or stone with jazzy black or brushed-gold hardware for a bohemian groove with rustic touches. Ever heard of knurling? Knurled knobs and faucets in matte black from Kohler have industrial chic, almost stereo equipment-like, look. Wands from Graff may inspire you to sing in the shower. Split finishes — black neck faucets with pull-down spouts — also add an edgy look to your bathroom or kitchen hardware. Chrome is still a favorite for many, but









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polished nickel, warm gold, or unlacquered brass are trending. Let brass patina for a warm, earthy look.

Side-mounted sink fixtures can be a topic of conversation. IKEA might even have started this design trend with their small, space-saving vanity sinks reminiscent of schoolyard drinking fountains. Try this design trick on a double-sink countertop for not only a nice, symmetrical look, but a great and thoughtful touch for left-handed folks.

**SURFACES:**

Mother Nature knows best  
**Go natural**

From stone to ceramic, Mother Nature does it best. Beautiful marble or stones make lovely countertops, but why stop there? Go hog wild

and make your entire sink cabinet out of a gorgeous veined stone – it adds to the bling factor! Dark honed marble is trending, but soft jade green Brazilian slate adds a warm, earthy look. Whether you choose Italian Carrera marble or white Macubas from Brazil (we also love Madre Perola, all available at Solid Rock on Haley St.) If money is not an object, marble walls can be stunning/jaw-dropping. Modulus DXV concrete sinks (that look like gray suede) on a maple vanity with leather pulls combine for one of the most stunning we’ve run across.

**SHOWER: Keeping it clean**

Seamless shower dams add a really clean look, and are easier to clean with no dirt or calcium build-up on





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shower glass or metal frames. Just tile all the way through and build a half or three-quarters tile wall to keep the water at bay. But what's not to love about floor-to-ceiling glass enclosures for a clean, seamless look? Double your pleasure with dual showerheads for those wanting to save water and shower with a friend.

#### SOAKING IT IN

Soaking tubs may be the ultimate in bath luxuriating. Although we

find most free-standing tubs somewhat easy to climb into, they can be almost impossible to exit, gracefully or otherwise. Most freestanding tubs take 100 gallons of water, making them not very environmentally friendly either. We prefer an alcove tub; there's a simple modern design from **Jacuzzi**, that's reasonably priced and comes with or without jets

#### JAZZY POWDER ROOMS

Fun wallpapers jazz up tiny spac-



Michelangelo Italian marble slabs  
in stock at Forte Stone [www.fortestone.com](http://www.fortestone.com)



Waterworks bathroom faucet with stone handles  
available from Ferguson Kitchen & Bath





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es. Go creative with console sink vanities and above counter vessel sinks. While fixtures have long been considered the “jewelry” in bathrooms, we’ve been known to swoon over unique light fixtures — Moroccan, Mexican tin, super modern or blown glass anyone? Check out **Moroccan Architectural Design** (based in San Francisco, but you can order online [www.moorisharchitecturaldesign.com](http://www.moorisharchitecturaldesign.com)) for Moroccan lighting, tiles, screens and more. Add an

exotic look: A metal Jali screen can create a semi privacy wall for a soaking tub. **Seven Hills Turkish Imports** on State Street carries cool lighting locally.

**IT’S ALL IN THE DETAILS: Unique touches that make the bathroom a “living or lounge” room**

A unique rug or bathmat (favorites include Moroccan rugs from **Upstairs Pierre La Fond** or see what **Santa Barbara Design Center’s**

rug expert Michael Kouroush recommends. Scour antique shops — **Summerland Collective**, **The Blue Door** in the Funk Zone or **Angel’s Antiques** in Carpinteria — for unique lighting fixtures from the ‘20s to the ‘70s and beyond and objects d’art.

Art on the bathroom walls can really add to the ambiance. Classic Santa Barbara would be an Edward Borein print from **James Main Fine Arts** in the historic El Paseo; something modern from

Sullivan & Goss by a local contemporary artist bold contemporary photography from Crista Dix’s **Wall Space Gallery** (by appointment). For California plein air oils, visit the lovely **Stewart Gallery**, which shares a space with **Lost Horizon Rare Books** in a new location in Montecito’s Upper Village. Who doesn’t appreciate a compelling first edition while on the loo or soaking in the tub or a fine painting to ponder?

(continued)



### HI-TECH

Bathroom mirrors with built-in sound systems encourage you to sing along with your iTunes while putting on your makeup (Economy Supply).

Ferguson's has a device called a "transducer" that turns your entire wall into a speaker or wall of sound.

Wall-mounted toilets are great, and so are bidets with heated seats, but skip toilet seats that rise to the occasion when you're just walking by. Not only are heated seats and bidets great from a cleanliness point of view, they're helpful for elderly folks or anyone with health issues in the wiping department. **Toto** is the longtime pick at **Economy Supply**.

### Lifesavers in the potential water leak dept.

If I'd known about the devices that can detect water leaks, it would have saved me a small fortune and a ton of headaches due to a slow wall leak that created mold and many expensive repairs. I can't overstress the importance of these devices for your own home and/or rental properties.

### RESOURCES:

#### Economy Supply

632 E Haley St, Santa Barbara  
www.economysb.com

#### Ferguson Bath, Kitchen & Lighting

602 East Montecito St., Santa Barbara.  
www.ferguson.com

#### TileCo

7 North Nopal St., Santa Barbara.  
www.tilecodist.com

#### Solid Rock Tile & Stone

624 E. Haley St.  
www.solidrocksb.com



Reed Interiors



Neolith from Solid Rock

