



DESIGN
a Spa-Style
BATHROOM

Written by AMANDA SHIELDS
Design by AMANDA SHIELDS INTERIORS
Photography by MIKE CHAJECKI

Perhaps you haven't given it much thought, but we spend a lot of time in the bathroom. Beyond the usual "business," the bathroom is a private place to get away, relax, and unwind. It's a focus for health and wellness and a haven for self-care and indulgence. Aside from being the most used room in the home, it's also the most intimate, making it the perfect place to customize to your life, likes, and longings. And when it comes to investment value, second only to the kitchen, bathroom renovations typically yield the best returns when they're well

equipped. When choosing features and finishes for your new bathroom, know where to splurge and where to save. Take it from a pro—not every upgrade is worth the spend!

Whether you're renovating for personal enjoyment or aiming to increase the value of your home, here are some spa-inspired trends to try in your bathroom this year.



Photography by STEPHANI BUCHMAN

Organic Influences, Everywhere

Earthy materials will continue to be front and center in the world of design and decor, further reinforcing our established connections with nature and the most basic elements all around us. Truly, the Earth has a way of soothing us when we need it most, making it a great source of inspiration for a spa-style bathroom.

For flooring and countertops, porcelain is the go-to for a number of reasons. Love the look of realistic Italian marble, elegant quartzite, or dramatic travertine? Porcelain tiles can echo any of these with realistic finishes and movement.

From a practical perspective, porcelain slabs are thin and designed to be installed over existing surfaces, including floor tile, wall tile, or countertops. They carry the look of fine natural stone at a fraction of the weight. Consider that a standard 1¼-inch thick piece of granite weighs between 18 and 20 pounds per square foot, and a two-inch thick piece can top 30 pounds per square foot. In contrast, porcelain slabs tip the scales at 2.81 pounds or 5.8 pounds per square foot, depending on their size.

Porcelain slabs come in huge 59-by-118-inch or 126-by-63-inch sheets, which means you can create a seamless, grout-less surface, virtually anywhere. And unlike natural stone, porcelain slabs never require sealing, and they are etch-, stain-, and heat-resistant.

Color and texture further reinforce this trending organic aesthetic. Gentle, neutral tones add to a calming atmosphere, particularly when warmed up with textural elements commonly found in nature. Think natural wood grains and rough stones, coarse surfaces, matte finishes, and the like.

Plumbing fixtures follow suit, with brushed, knurled, and matte finishes shining most—or maybe more accurately, not shining quite as much as their polished counterparts. Muted finishes have become a popular hardware selection from chrome, copper, and gold to, more recently, black fixtures. These finishes offer an organic appeal and beautifully complement a suite of natural, neutral design choices.



Photography by MIKE CHAJECKI

Lighting

Your lighting decisions should be guided by the bathroom's overall style direction—whether it's nature, glamour, or modern luxury. The lighting you choose should underpin your desired aesthetic. There are a few things to consider when it comes to your bathroom lighting, regardless of the style. Ensure you have enough lighting to deliver function and aesthetic appeal to the space. Install dedicated lighting in each key area of use, such as the vanity, bathing and shower area, toilet, dressing area, and meditation zone. Incorporate a balanced mix of ambient lighting, task lighting, and accent lighting to enhance function and highlight focal points.

When selecting your light fixtures, stay consistent in your materials, finishes, and styles, and ensure your choices align with one another and the broader aesthetic of the bathroom design.

To achieve a soothing atmosphere, ensure all lighting is placed on separate switches and dimmers, allowing you to turn it on, crank it up, or tone it down as desired.





Bathing

Your bathing area is where you can really customize your space to cater to your unique preferences—*aesthetic and practical*. Modern bathroom designs prioritize bath and shower experiences within open, seamless layouts that don't demand you choose one or the other. Frameless, curbless showers feature continuous floor and wall tile with streamlined rain shower heads, sprays, and stream elements that are all but hidden when not in use. Meanwhile, deep, freestanding soaker tubs are front and center, as much about pampering the body as the eye. These artful, sculptural forms are complemented by a range of colors and materials, suited to every style, encouraging longer soaks and a little more "me time" at every opportunity.

PRO TIP:

Try it before you buy it! A soaker tub should fit your entire body to ensure the ultimate level of comfort. Don't be afraid to get in and try it on for size. Remember that each bathtub has its intricacies, and what works for one person may not work for another.