

Decor Score: Bringing the great outdoors inside

by Rose Bennett Gilbert

Q: We are building a log house in the country, but not with exposed log walls all through the house. I don't like all that yellow wood, so we're having regular plasterboard walls we can paint. There will be wood in the bedroom and bathroom, in deference to my husband who really does love the woodsy look. In fact, I'm even willing to have log-look cabinets in the bath. But before I say anything to him and the contractor, I am wondering if it will be too much?

A: Not if one is a real-wood "freak," and many men are. With good reason, too. Wood is naturally warm and easy to live with, because - my theory - we have lived with it, literally since humankind built our first non-cave houses.

In a bath, the most intimate and personal room in the house, wood is softer to both the eye and body than other materials.

That said, I'll leave it up to you to decide what constitutes "too" much wood. Rooms don't get much more woodsy than the rustic bath we show here (from Dream Maker Bath & Kitchen at www.dreammaker-remodel.com). It's like stepping into the great outdoors, from the pine-plank ceiling to the pebble stone path set into the floor of slate-look tiles. Including the his 'n' her matching vanities, the cabinets are all rustic pine with tree-branch drawer and door pulls. Even the mirrors are framed to match, and don't miss the funky tree trunk towel rack and three-legged stool.

BUSY IN YOUR BATH - With its rich rustic wood tones and natural stone floor and wainscot this bath could never be tepid. CNS Photo courtesy of Dream Maker Bath and Kitchen. Yes, it's kind of a guy thing, but, hey, you've got your more elegant painted plaster on all the other walls.

IS YOUR DOORWAY LESS THAN ADORABLE?

It's downright ugly if it lets in drafts, detracts from your home's curb appeal or scares off trick-or-treaters, says Sara Theis of Therma-Tru Doors. One way to remedy a dreadful doorway is to enter Therma-Tru's annual Ugly Door Contest, and you might win from \$3,000 to \$5,000 to buy new doors.

Last year's ugliest entry even had a sign urging visitors to "Please Use Other Door," it was that bad. Check out the details before the May 1 deadline at www.myuglydoor.com.

Q: I remember sitting on my grandmother's horsehair sofa when I was a child. Now I've inherited that sofa and would like to recover it, but is anybody making horsehair fabric today?

A: Yes, but they are mostly in England and Europe, where it has been used since Chippendale's time, and is now enjoying a renaissance as the fabric for the restoration of antiques. Long-prized for its durability and silky sheen, horsehair fabrics were used in the great houses of the Old World, not to mention the White House of the New.

Because horsetail hairs are used as the weft (with cotton or polyester as the warp), the fabrics can never be wider than 28 inches, about as long as a horse's tail grows. Today, you will find patterns, as well as solid colors - and not just black: Aimara Masterpieces recently introduced a set of Deco dining chairs in what they call "exuberant" pink (www.aimaramasterpieces.com/).

Keep in mind that colors will vary because the horse hair itself does, but that only adds to the appeal.

PS. Bet you also remember wiggling and itching a bit, sitting on your Grandmother's horsehair sofa. Can't promise that that's changed a lot.

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