

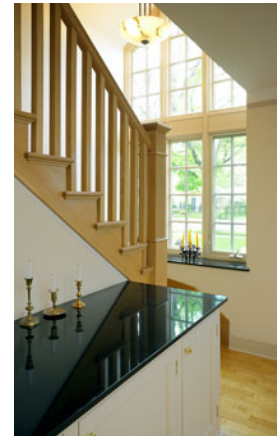


# NEWS YOU CAN USE

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## Product Trends: A Focus on Counter Material and Flooring

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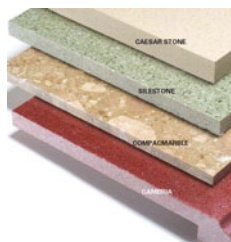
Today, one can't be in the home remodeling or construction industry without feeling the need to make "earth-friendly" choices in materials and products. It's impossible to do full justice to the subject in a few paragraphs, but we'd like to share some trends within the industry as they relate to two specific product categories, counters and flooring. Homeowners often make design decisions based on what they have seen in homes of friends or magazines. In New England, for example, traditional choices such as granite counters and wood floors are still popular. Design preferences are always changing and even modern interpretations of traditional looks are becoming cleaner and less ornate. The desire for simpler, less crowded spaces is perhaps a reaction to the past 5-7 years where "uber-decorating" seemed the norm.

### **Kitchen Counter Materials:**

Gold and brown fossil-like granite counters were very popular for kitchens a few years ago as were many other types with strong color and patterning. Current cooler color palettes are incorporating hues in blues and grays, which is influencing counter selections. Honed granite finishes are popular in the grays and blacks and offer an understated look—less glitzy and more casual when paired with stained or painted cabinetry. A trend towards calmer color palettes is steering homeowners and designers away from the busier and less uniform granite patterns.

While granite is still a favored counter material for many kitchens, there are more interesting and "eco-friendly" surfaces to be considered that are also more durable. Quartz and engineered products (manufactured by companies such as Ceasarstone, DuPont, Corian, Cambria, HanStone, Silestone, to name a few) are available in more and more choices, both color, and pattern.

Engineered products are often easier to incorporate into a design scheme than granite and marble, as they come in many colors and evolve as design preferences change. The more complicated and inconsistent patterning of granite and natural stone is sometimes passed over in favor of engineered products, not only for looks but also for ease of care and scratch resistance. Smooth-looking and uniform subtle patterns in "infinite" color options can accommodate a wide range of homeowner and designer tastes. For more information on engineered stone types see [www.engineeredstone.com](http://www.engineeredstone.com).



### **Bath Counter Material:**

Marble, limestone, and travertine are still favored choices for baths, but often impractical for kitchens because of their high maintenance requirements. Sealants may need to be applied periodically to keep marble and limestone looking and performing their best. Some of these sealants have high volatile organic compound (VOC) content. These softer and porous stones can be subject to cracking and crumbling even once installed. Consistent water exposure will affect polished surfaces and will generate more of a 'honed' look. Fabricators are experimenting with different textures of stone surfaces to create interest and in some cases improve durability. "Firing" and "antiquing" are processes that remove mica particles from the stone to create a smooth but leather-like quality to the touch. These treatments offer homeowners more options than just polished or honed surfaces.

In baths today, engineered surfaces are also good choices for homeowners who want to avoid the maintenance involved with natural stone, but who perhaps still seek a quiet, neutral palette. Light uniform colors are available and work well paired with many tile designs. Others who like vibrancy and high contrast colors will also find options in these engineered products. The choices are endless! Since these engineered products are man-made from quartz stone which is readily available, mining of exotic granite and marble is reduced....certainly a benefit.



### **Flooring:**

Flooring choices today are broader and more varied than they've ever been. There are many factors that determine whether a floor is considered practical, maintenance-free, or "green." Potentially earth-friendly products include cork, linoleum, bamboo, hardwood, some carpeting types, and ceramic tile. Trends in flooring are influenced by color preferences as well. The cooler hues of blue and gray are appearing in flooring materials just as they are with counter materials. Wood flooring companies are being asked to "paint" or "pickle" wood in colors such as black and gray to keep up with these design trends. Complicated wood grains are being stained dark or toned-down with color to reduce the visual complexity of the wood figure in keeping with the trend toward simplicity.

In kitchens and baths, wood and tile are still favored for their beauty and comfort and ease of cleaning. Wood is often earth-friendly, but some wood finishes are high in VOCs. Cork and linoleum are sometimes selected for their quiet and comfort underfoot, with an eye toward earth-friendliness, but may not be suitable for wet locations. Recycled glass tile and fireclay tile can be used as flooring, and can be "green" products in that they keep waste out of landfills and are easy to clean and relatively maintenance-free.

Porcelain tile is an excellent and durable flooring choice and tile showrooms display a wide selection of product. Porcelain tile requires little maintenance on its surface, perhaps only a sealant on the grout to keep it stain resistant. Most porcelain tiles don't show a white or red clay product below the glazed surface since they are "through-body" colored tiles...an advantage should a tile ever chip. For more information on environmentally friendly flooring, you can visit <http://www.greenfloors.com>.



### **New Services From Byggmeister:**

Beginning this fall, Byggmeister will be offering color consultations to its clients as part of our design services. Working together with your architect, product selection coordinator, lead on your renovation, and of course you, our color consultant will help unify the look of your space. Color consultations are available as part of your renovation or as a separate service. To learn more, visit us at [www.byggmeister.com](http://www.byggmeister.com) or send us an email at [info@byggmeister.com](mailto:info@byggmeister.com).