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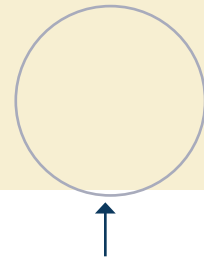
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**(we also offer philosophy & psychology upon request)**

# The New Buzz Word: Mold



**What does mold really smell like?  
Scratch and find out.**

When I was first entering the building industry almost 25 years ago, radon was the hot topic causing homeowner anxiety. Today it seems to be mold. I suspect that, just as radon mitigation, where needed, is pretty routine and non-controversial these days, mold mitigation will also soon be considered routine and unthreatening.

Mold risks are directly proportional to the amount of mold in a house. All houses will have some mold spores in the air; almost all will have actual mold growth somewhere inside. How worried should you really be about mold in your home? It depends on how much mold is in your house, and how vulnerable you are.

### What constitutes a mold problem?

Here's two ways of thinking about the question:

1) If someone in the house is having an adverse respiratory reaction to being in the house, there's some chance it's mold-related. If a thorough visual inspection does not uncover any noticeable mold growth, one diagnostic measure would be to have a test done to compare mold spore count of indoor air versus outdoor air.

Mold researcher, Harriet Burge, has come up with a useful rule of thumb: if the spore count of the indoor air is at least twice that of the outdoor air in the general vicinity of the house, you will probably want to look more closely for mold sources in the house.

2) If you do find mold, that may not mean you have a "mold problem" in and of itself, but it is a 100% reliable indicator that you have a water problem. To grow, mold requires the right food, the right temperature range and water. The only one of these three that doesn't really belong in most areas of the house is water.

The most frequent source of water where it doesn't belong is faulty exterior details, such as roof leaks, window leaks, or poor exterior drainage that directs too much water to the basement. These are pretty obvious things that show up quickly and can be dealt with quickly.

After leaks, condensation is usually the second biggest source of water that leads to mold growth in homes.

Condensation occurs when warm, moist air comes into contact with a cool surface and the water it contains loses energy and undergoes a phase change from vapor to liquid. (Water vapor does not cause a problem in homes—liquid water does.) Condensation problems can be remedied by one or both of two means: reducing indoor humidity, or eliminating indoor surfaces that are cold enough to cause condensation.

The third biggest source of water that can cause mold growth is capillary action, typically up through basement floor slabs or through basement walls. Concrete is a very porous material and, absent some sort of capillary break such as polyethylene sheets or bituminous coatings, ground water can easily migrate through the concrete. Capillarity does not cause standing water, but it can lead to high enough moisture levels under a basement floor carpet, for instance,



or behind a finished basement wall, that the environment there is very conducive to mold growth.

### The best ways to get rid of mold:

1) Wipe small amounts of mold off the affected surfaces by using water and a mild detergent. (Bleach works, too, but the bleach often poses more

of a health hazard than the mold.) Sherwin-Williams has come out with a bleach alternative called, attractively enough, "KrudKutter," that one of our painters, Catchlight, has started using in the interests of worker and client safety.

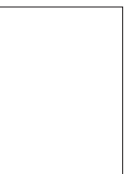
2) Deal with larger areas (and certainly rotted wood or plywood) by removing the affected material completely, disrupting the mold as little as possible (wear a respirator), and carefully placing the material in secure plastic garbage bags. Often, wetting the materials lightly with water (if it's not already wet anyway) will help keep the mold from going air-borne while you're bagging it.

3) Faced with big expanses of mold (very general rule of thumb would be anything more than 10 to 15 square feet or so), you might seriously want to consider a mold remediation company.

*Written by Byggmeister President, Paul Eldrenkamp*



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# design trends

## SPRING INTO COLOR

Summer is around the corner. It is the time of year many homeowners reflect how they would like to change the way a room in their home looks and feels. One of the easiest ways to alter the way a room looks is to add some color.



### THANK HEAVENS FOR CALIFORNIAN SMOG

A cursory review of the evolution of modern paint reveals the motivating force to be the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and its influence over all products and activity related to air quality. The gradual elimination of oil-based paints (an anachronism nationally except here in New England) in favor of low-VOC water-borne products has been a huge step forward for our industry. And now, fortified by the LEED standards which require that 'green' products equal or exceed conventional materials in durability and service, modern paint formulations now yield exceptionally high performing and dependable paints for interior and exterior use.

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### A little color goes a long way

If you are hesitant about change, start with a small room or area. Perhaps a home office, powder room, or kitchen to help get you started. If you look around your kitchen you will find most have very little wall space due to cabinetry and appliances. A kitchen is a perfect room to start with because of the limited wall space, which often makes it easy for the homeowners to paint the room themselves.

Before you decide on a paint color, be sure to access the entire space, including adjacent rooms. Often, one room leads into another without wall separation. It is important to be aware of these adjoining rooms so your new color doesn't clash with your existing rooms décor. If your kitchen opens into your family room or your dining room, make sure to pick a color that integrates the two rooms. If an adjoining room has warm shades of reds or yellows, you will need to consider hues that complement these colors in the room you will paint. This does not mean you cannot choose cooler colors such as blues and greens, it just means you need to find



the right shade that balances them.

### A fresh look in no time

Pick one of your favorite hues and paint a large piece of white cardboard (you can find these at most paint stores). Place the cardboard next to the wall you want to paint and leave it there for a few days. This will enable you to view the selected color against the kitchen cabinets or existing furniture you have in the dining room. It will also allow you to view the

new paint color during various times of the day when the lighting changes.

Are you still not sure? Perhaps you like the color but think it may be too much for your room. Try painting the walls a shade lighter than the original hue that you picked. Basically go up one sample on that particular color index.

Another option would be to paint one wall the original color you picked and the remaining walls of the room a neutral color. Painting one wall in a room a contrasting color will add depth and energy, but choose carefully because the wall you select will likely become the focal point of the room.

You can also use contrasting trim colors to balance bright colors. White trim can add contrast to bold colors and help balance your room. The same applies with complimentary colors, which are opposite each other on the color wheel, for example blue and orange or red and green. Be selective when choosing complementary colors, as they will intensify each other visually when placed side by side.



Consider painting the walls one color and using a complementary hue to accessorize through an area rug, window treatments, pottery, or even candles. This will add depth and interest to your room without disturbing the balance.

Written by Karla Chronopoulos,  
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