



Trending in the Bath

Freestanding tubs, large-format porcelain tile, floating or raised-height vanities, large walk-in showers, frosted glass and shades of gray are among the hottest trends in today's master bath projects.

Every March, *KBDN's* Spring Bath Remodeling Report asks designers across the country to share what design elements and products they see trending in master baths in their region of the country. Invariably there are some similarities that have captured the attention of homeowners regardless of where they live, while others are more regional in nature.

Some trends have made the *KBDN* 'trends list' before and are showing no signs of slowing down in popularity.

While some trends mentioned in this year's report may come as no surprise, it's interesting to discover how designers are interpreting them

and incorporating them with other elements within the space.

Trend: FREESTANDING TUBS

The tub debate – whether to leave it in or take it out – seems to depend on whom is asked. Clients of Brooke Eversoll, CKD, CBD, of S&W Kitchens, in Palm Harbor, FL, lean toward maintaining at least one tub in the home, as do clients of Liz Firebaugh, CKD, owner of Signature Kitchens, in Petoskey, MI. "Everyone thinks they're going to take out the tub, but they end up leaving it in," says Firebaugh, "especially in larger baths."

But for clients of Traci Shields, ASID, of Friedman & Shields, in Scottsdale, AZ, a tub is no longer considered a necessity, though she does encourage them to keep it if they have the space. "Although having said that, I've done major remodels where clients want a huge walk-in shower," she says. "I'm surprised by how few people care about tubs. They used to want to keep it for resale, but now more people say it doesn't matter. It's such expensive real estate."

When homeowners do opt for a tub, it's almost always a freestanding style. "My clients have moved completely away from deck-mounted tubs...at any price point, not just high

← Many of Liz Firebaugh's clients want the 'calm' master baths illustrated in these spaces, which feature gray, white and/or blue...all trending palettes for the Michigan designer. Furniture-style vanities – painted or glazed and topped with a light-colored countertop – and freestanding tubs are also popular, as are specialized lighting features such as chandeliers and sconces. Lighting is a great way to integrate trends, Firebaugh notes, as are faucets and mirrors. "They can offer a pop of a current trend, but can easily be changed out. My baths tend to be very classic, leaning toward trendless. But an element such as lighting, faucets and mirrors can be trendy. We just completed a daughter's bath with a fun, bright green mirror above a white vanity. It made the room feel 'young' and brought a whole different ambiance to it."



Photo: Rickie Agapito

end," says Shields. "A freestanding tub is a really strong design accent, and it gives clients more opportunity to add personality to their bathroom since there are so many styles...everything from a slipper look to ones that are boxy or curved."

Freestanding tubs are also almost always white, which was the resounding theme Shields observed at this year's KBIS. "Fashion colors are out," she says. "All I saw [at KBIS] was white, white, white...even more so than in the past. I think a lot of it is related to the freestanding tub movement. Everyone is also doing sinks, toilets and countertops in white, which gives a clean spa look."

An added convenience is the use of accent tables placed near the tub, styled to complement the space, such as an antique furniture piece for charm in a traditional bath, a sleek, glass table in a contemporary space or a C-table made of solid surface material, such as those Shields saw at KBIS. "With the tub deck gone, there is nowhere to put anything," she says.

Trend: PORCELAIN TILE

Designing with porcelain tile isn't necessarily new, as designers coast to coast have seen tile as a leading trend for several years now – especially large-format sizes that look like wood and stone. This year is no different, with more than half of the designers noting that porcelain tile is still hugely popular with their clients.

"We're seeing a lot of 12"x24", even up to 18"x36", says Eversoll. "People want to see less grout, and they prefer rectangular sizes over squares."

The versatility of styles – including those that resemble natural stone and



Photo: Scott Sandler

↑ Brooke Eversoll's clients prefer a clean, less fussy design aesthetic, characterized by this master bath, which features a freestanding tub, glass tile accents and floating vanities. Large-format, rectangular porcelain tile is also changing the look of many of her baths. "Some porcelain tiles have the look of natural stone, which gives a traditional, classic look, while others have linear striations, which give a more contemporary feel. By changing the color or texture, while keeping the size the same, you can change the whole look of a bath."

← This master bath represents many elements being requested by Traci Shields' clients, including freestanding tubs, floating vanities with rectangular sinks, framed mirrors, oversized shower niches and porcelain tile. "Tile that mimics wood is a huge craze right now. In this bath there are many different pattern combinations, so it doesn't look repetitive. It looks natural and believable."

those with linear striations – adds to its appeal by lending itself to a variety of looks, adds Eversoll, who frequently combines porcelain tiles with large, rectangular glass tiles used as an accent. "Glass is especially popular behind plumbing, such as showerheads," she explains.

Meredith Weiss, of Merri Interiors, in Commack, NY, has also noticed designers, including herself, using "wood plank" porcelain tile on shower walls. "It can be contemporary or traditional, masculine or feminine," she says. "It's

very universal...and fun. It's an unexpected surprise to see in the shower."

An added amenity that more and more designers are including with porcelain tile is radiant heat. "Since baths aren't necessarily large spaces, the investment isn't as high," says Weiss, who notes that the availability of electric mats can lower the cost.

Even people living in warmer climates enjoy the comfort it provides. "Radiant floor heat has always been considered a luxury," says Shields. "People used to be afraid to even ask

about it. But it's more affordable than people think – if you're already replacing the flooring – and there are so many systems that are user friendly for installers. I'm adding it to more than 50% of the baths I design. Even in Arizona, people are gravitating toward it!"

Ken Perrin, of Artistic Renovations of Ohio, in Cleveland, OH, often takes radiant heat a step further by also adding it to shower benches, especially those made of granite, which is still popular in his area.