

2013 home interiors: More form and function in less space

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

After two decades of supersized houses and racing to keep up with the Joneses, home interiors in 2013 will be more about efficiency, personalization and coziness.

The desire for more personal, intimate spaces grew from the age of customization. With video on demand, smartphone applications for thermostats, and in-house latte and soda machines, it is only natural people would want homes that reflect their lifestyle and personality.

"Clients are also becoming more educated with the quality of design and function," said David Benton, an architect with Rill Architects. "Clients focus on how they live and want a customized home unique for them. Home quality outweighs home quantity."

What began as a movement with the Sarah Susanka book series "Not So Big House" has evolved into a mantra and influenced style. People want to pack smaller spaces with big luxury.

The formal dining room is being transformed into a hybrid dining room or study. Benton said libraries are replacing living rooms, as well.

"The traditional living room is becoming smaller or has been replaced by the study or library," Benton said. "Rooms that were only used occasionally or were for show, like the living or dining rooms, are now multifunctional spaces."

And these spaces are being designed to suit the homeowner, not the neighbor or future owner.

"Even the clients who intend to stay in their home for 10 or 20 years or more are conscious that their home is not the ATM it was in the mid-2000s," said Michael Sauri,

president of TriVistaUSA, a design and build company. "Our clients allow themselves to make choices they want to live in and don't often worry about resale regarding colors, tile choices, fixtures or even cabinets."

This includes venturing into more contemporary styles and cutting-edge design. "Clients have definitely become more aware of good design and are especially more open to contemporary design," Benton said. "In the past, traditional architecture has been the go-to design of choice in D.C. Now clients are more comfortable with contemporary design, not only with the interior layout but also the exterior. Large expanses of glass and open interiors will continue to grow in popularity for 2013."

One trend popping up in more area homes is the floating bathroom basin, like ones offered at Boffi in Georgetown. Mounted on the walls with no exposed plumbing, these basins are as efficient as they are aesthetically pleasing.

The master bedroom is getting smaller and is part of a trend Benton called "right sizing," a departure from massive owners' suites.

"Another area of the home that is tightening up is the master bath. We are seeing more requests for the master bath as a functional and comfortable space; not one to hang out in," he said. "We are seeing fewer requests for the huge soaking tub. Instead, a generous shower has become the bathroom indulgence."

A fan of the "Not So Big House" movement, Sauri sees more clients rethinking expansive spaces and "bonus" rooms.

"Let's take the space you have and make it beautiful and functional," Sauri said. "Like a gorgeous, useful jewel box."



Resources

- » Boffi
boffi.com
- » TriVistaUSA
trivistausa.com
- » Rill Architects
rillarchitects.com



TOP: COURTESY BOFFI GEORGETOWN, BOTTOM: COURTESY RILL ARCHITECTS

Home interiors are becoming more about efficiency, personalization and coziness. Whether you choose to install something ultra-contemporary like a floating bathroom basin, above, take a traditional dining area and combine it with a home office, bottom right, or design a bedroom to be cozier instead of larger, bottom left, homes are becoming more stylish and efficient.

Tips for protecting trees and shrubs from storms

By Dean Fosdick
The Associated Press

Even the sturdiest-looking trees can be brought down by high winds, heavy snow and ice, but there are ways you can limit the damage.

Here are some storm-proofing suggestions that will pay off over time, starting with determining which trees in your landscape are the most vulnerable.

"I'm a great believer in storm-proofing or preparing for anything that will have the most impact on your lifestyle," said Mark Chisholm, a third-generation arborist from Howell, N.J., and spokesman for Stihl Inc., a manufacturer of outdoor power tools.

"Try to prep your house and yard

if you have the time," he said.

"Clear rain gutters so water will flow. Remove loose lawn furniture from decks. Stabilize trees around the house by cabling or tying them down, especially those that you know have structural flaws."

Additional tips:

» Get to know an arborist or tree care professional — now. "When a storm hits, you'll likely be prioritized as an existing customer," said Chisholm, who works with the power industry clearing debris left behind by severe weather, including Hurricane Sandy in October.

» Get a prestorm assessment to identify trouble spots. Decaying and leaning trees should be pruned, staked or removed, especially those threatening dwellings or utility lines.

» Think safety during cleanup. "The stuff on the ground won't hurt you unless downed power lines are involved," Chisholm said. "It's what's overhead that's dangerous. Stress fractures or dead and broken limbs can come crashing down and do serious harm."

» Be especially careful when working with chainsaws. "If a tree is on the ground, try to cut it up without harming yourself in the process," said Kim Gabel with the University of Florida Extension in Key West. "If a badly damaged tree is still standing, it's not recommended that a layman climb a ladder to take care of it. Get professional help."

» Patience can be a money-saver when dealing with ice or snow loads on trees. "Wait until it melts and the



DEAN FOSDICK/AP

Take time to storm-proof your yard to limit the damage big storms can cause.

weight is removed to see what kind of damage was done," Chisholm said. "Trees are resilient and are capable of bouncing back."

» Plant native trees rather than exotics. Some varieties fare better than others in storms, especially trees with conical branching, those with strong branch connections and trees that are small when mature, according to the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety.

» There is strength in numbers. "Trees planted in groups survive better in high winds," Chisholm said. "They can't bend as readily to the point of failure. They also help dampen the [wind] force."

» Learn how to assess damage. "If you have a tree that has lost a couple of branches of significant size but the trunk is mostly intact, that's still a keeper," said Hank Stelzer, a state forestry specialist with the University of Missouri Extension. "If you lose the top of a tree from ice or a windstorm and if half or a quarter of the trunk is gone, that's a no-brainer. It should go."