

## Are You a Little Bit Country?

Survey Results Show Consumers Place Importance on Design Themes When Decorating

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(ARA) - No, this isn't an article chronicling the '70s dynamic duo of Donny and Marie Osmond. Actually, the question, "Are You a Little Bit Country," refers to today's decorating trends. Research conducted by Creative Specialties International, a division of Moen Incorporated; and Rooms of America, a consumer research organization, have found that consumers typically decorate in three primary thematic approaches: country, casual/contemporary and traditional.

Rooms of America surveys thousands of Americans annually to track consumer decorating trends and preferences. Recently, this quantitative research showed that 74 percent of those surveyed believe style is "very important" to "extremely important" in their overall decorating decisions.

In terms of specific style preferences, 38 percent of the population decorates in a casual style, often referred to as contemporary. Following closely behind, 35 percent of consumers choose a traditional style of decorating.

Lastly, 27 percent of Americans decorate in a country theme, which includes secondary themes such as Shaker, Country French and Mission.

These decorating styles vary across regional areas, however. For instance, survey results showed that traditional decorating themes are preferred in the Southwestern and Eastern Great Lakes areas of the United States. Those living in the Southeastern and Western states typically choose a more casual style of decorating; and country is more prevalent in pockets of the Northeast and Midwest.

### The Person Behind the Style

Now that we know how Americans decorate . let's take a closer look at the person behind the style. What type of individual decorates in a country fashion versus contemporary? Does a certain age dictate a style? Do particular colors influence a decorating trend? Read on to see how the characteristics of decorators have changed over the years.

Rounding up the largest decorating style, consumers who decorate in a casual fashion take their direction from many sources, including the pages of Pottery Barn catalogs or Martha Stewart magazines. Once thought of as a style filled with black plastic chairs and combinations of chrome and glass, this decorating theme now includes clean, simple lines, geometric shapes and neutral colors such as beige, white and gray. Furniture and accessories falling under this style typically include light woods, such as natural maple.

The traditional style of decorating hasn't changed much over the years. Its trademarks still include rich, ornate designs and deep, dark colors -- a classic look that never goes out of style. Jewel tones, such as emerald green, burgundy and navy blue, are very popular, as are ornate detailing in polished brass and gold. Woodwork and furniture in this style is typically made of leather, cherry wood and dark stains.



The country style of today no longer features the '80s look of plaids, ducks and pineapples. Instead, today's "cool" country is very stylish -- a favorite of baby boomers and Generation Xers. The trend here is displayed through a mix of bright colors, such as lime green, bright blue and red, as well as softer tones including some pastels and earth tones. Much of the furniture in this style is sturdy and overstuffed, and features a crackle or distressed painted finish to give it almost an antique, nostalgic style. It's the perfect approach for those seeking a comfortable, "relax and put your feet on the coffee table" feel.

## **Style in the Bath**

Many believe that decorating trends are limited to family rooms, kitchens or dining areas. However, that theory no longer holds true. In fact, the decorating survey found that more than 75 percent of respondents said that decorating themes are "somewhat important" to "extremely important" in their master bath or powder room.

What does that mean to manufacturers of bath-related products? According to Eric Jungbluth, vice president and general manager of Creative Specialties International, a leading manufacturer in the bath accessory marketplace, "Consumer style preferences are our number one consideration when designing new bath accessory collections. We take these survey results seriously and even conduct our own focus groups to further substantiate consumer preferences."

According to the survey, chrome is still the most popular bath accessory finish, but brushed nickel, consumers' second choice, is on the rise. In addition, other finishes, such as oil-rubbed bronze and wrought iron, are also increasing in popularity with consumers. In fact, non-chrome finishes represent almost half of bath accessory sales.

Relying on this extensive research, Creative Specialties International recently introduced four new bath accessory collections designed to reflect the styles used in today's bath. Sold under the Inspirations brand, the Kelse, Vernini, Sienna and Westbury collections each fall into one of the three design categories -- traditional, contemporary/casual or country.

"From a 'retro' style in oil-rubbed bronze to contemporary designs in brushed chrome . dramatic wrought iron finishes and even accessories made of maple and oak, the bath accessories category has really come to life with new and innovative designs," added Jungbluth. "The collections totally complement any bath décor and provide the perfect finishing touch to an overall bath design."

## **The Finishing Touch**

It doesn't matter whether you decorate in a country, contemporary or traditional style, it's the finishing touches that can really make a difference in any décor. For instance, simple bath accessories, such as a stylistic open towel ring or decorative glass shelf, can add a touch of innovative design to a powder room or bathroom.

"Homeowners are starting to realize that bathroom decorating doesn't end with the faucet and showerhead selection - it's really just the beginning," said Jungbluth. "Accessories are now manufactured in so many varieties -- including those that actually match the design and finish of faucets -- that they truly add another dimension to bathroom decorating."

Thinking "out of the box" and using traditional accessories in non-traditional ways can alter the overall feel of a room. Following are a few, simple decorative ideas to use bath accessories as stylish additions to a room, rather than simply as functional pieces.

To add a soothing and intimate glow to a room, try placing small votive candles in existing (or new) soap or tumbler holders. In a larger bath, use tall tapers to complement the smaller candles and add drama to a room.

If counter space is a concern, install a decorative glass shelf on a wall. Its purpose can be more than functional -- place fresh flowers, potpourri, or small photographs on the shelf to add a bit of character to the bath.

Larger photographs, that may not fit on a glass shelf, still can find a "home" in the bath. Experiment by suspending a picture frame with a colorful ribbon, and hang it from a unique robe hook. Try using a frame that matches the accessory style and finish to complete the room's look.

To add color to a room -- throw away the paint brush! Instead, install double towel racks and place a variety of towels on them in different sizes, colors and textures. Many towels are available in whimsical prints and styles to liven up a bath or powder room, and can be changed regularly to create a different décor in a minute.

On a budget? Place fresh flowers in a toothbrush holder to add a bit of color to the bath room. Or, hang decorative robe hooks in a unique pattern on the wall to enhance the character of a room.

And the best advice when it comes to decorating? There are no rules. According to the decorating Web site, [decorateyourhouse.com](http://decorateyourhouse.com), "Houses that are homes shouldn't look like museums. Try out ideas and if they don't work, try again. That's half the fun."

### **The Author:**

For more information on bath style trends, or accessory products available from Creative Specialties International, write 25300 Al Moen Drive, North Olmsted, Ohio 44070-8022, call toll free (800) 321-8809, or visit their Web site at [www.moen.com](http://www.moen.com).

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