

Photo courtesy of Master Builders Association

A large kitchen island provides space for multi-tasking as the family gathers.

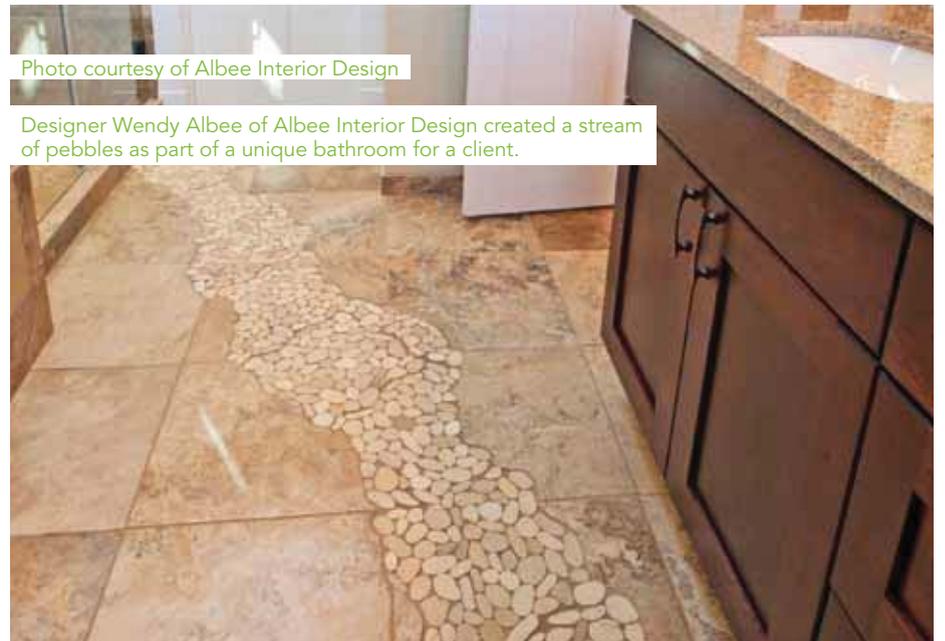


Photo courtesy of Albee Interior Design

Designer Wendy Albee of Albee Interior Design created a stream of pebbles as part of a unique bathroom for a client.

Inside Out: A spring facelift for your home

By Melanie Workhoven

Spring is a time of renewal. With the days longer and brighter, we look forward to bringing color to our gardens and finding ways to make the inside of our homes feel fresh and updated. Giving your home a spring facelift doesn't have to cost a fortune. Even small changes can make a big impact. Here are some trends for 2013 and fun ways to incorporate them into your décor.

The brilliance of simplicity

Refresh the look of your home by paring down. Donate or give away the items you really don't need or use. Take down the art and photos off the walls and remove the accent pieces in one room at a time, stripping it down as much as possible and studying it.

Before doing anything else, consider if the room needs a fresh coat of paint. Painting, and rearranging the furniture, can make the space feel brand new and more functional.

It's a good idea to just live with the space for a few days and then begin to add accent and design pieces back. Look for new ways to showcase special pieces and try arranging your art and other elements in new ways. Store items that you want to keep but not display in creative places like

a decorative storage bench, armoire desk or under-bed drawers.

Maximize your space

Consider transforming a formal dining room or guest bedroom into a multi-purpose room that you will use more often and more fully. A quality sofa bed can be quite comfortable for guests and takes up much less space, giving you more room for other purposes. As more people work at least part-time from home, that spare bedroom could become the home office you've been wanting. Open up your home by removing unnecessary walls or hallways to create a "great room." Or, to make a room feel bigger, simply light the dark corners.

Recycle and upcycle

An old chair can be reupholstered into something whimsical. Transform an unused dresser into a bathroom vanity or add legs to a piece of furniture for an interesting kitchen island. Recycled products are showing up everywhere from countertops made from corn, linseed oil and paper to outdoor furniture made from old tires.

Upcycling or repurposing is also in vogue. For example, if you have a lot of

old, chipped dishes consider using them to make a mosaic on your patio floor.

The new family room

For many, the kitchen has become the new family room since today's hectic families spend much of their time there. Updates to consider in the kitchen include a larger island that would allow the family to cook together or multi-task with computers, the television and homework. That way, you can keep the kids close while doing their homework or playing on the computer. A large table in the kitchen can deliver the same results. If you like to entertain, you could add a bar with a beverage fridge and wine rack, which can be done without taking up a lot of space.

Bring the outside in

Bridge your indoor and outdoor living space with similar color palettes such as red accents in the family room and red geraniums on the patio.

Bring the outside in by using materials like pebble tiles in the shower or a rustic stone fireplace, or even using the same slate tile inside and out.

Expand your living space to the exterior

by using the new outdoor fabrics, furniture, rugs and light fixtures. Outdoor kitchens or a comfortable sitting area around a fireplace are gaining popularity and can be used almost year-round if covered and heated.

Trending now

To give a room that extra pop consider incorporating one of the design trends that are hot for 2013. African influences bring warm colors and animal skin imitations back into the eclectic interiors of many fashion enthusiasts. Floral patterns are back in style with a twist. This year look for floral patterns on a white background for a romantic feel. Handmade design elements are everywhere. Embroidered and knitted accents add color, texture and charm from carpets with thousands of knots to storage baskets and poof covers. It's all part of our natural desire for self-expression and an appreciation of DIY projects as a form of art so go ahead, pare down and express yourself! //

Wendy Albee

Wendy Albee of Albee Interior Design, a member of the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties, provided information contained in this article.

Call before you dig

With the nicer weather of spring, many homeowners will be tackling outdoor projects. Snohomish County Public Utility District reminds its customers to plan ahead to prevent accidentally hitting an underground utility line when digging.

PUD customers should use the "Call before you dig" hotline at 811 at least two

working days ahead of time before starting a digging project of more than 12 inches deep, including landscaping, remodeling and fencing. Hotline staff will work to provide the locations of lines that serve power, gas, water, sewer and/or telephone utilities that are located along the right of way of a resident's property.

The PUD owns and maintains underground services on private property for residential single family homes and will mark lines up to customers' meters. Apartment buildings, schools and mobile home parks may need to retain a private locator, depending on meter locations. Private locators are available to provide

this service for a fee.

The "Call before you dig" 811 hotline is a free service, which is required by law. Severed utility cables or water lines not only inconvenience people, they are expensive to repair. If you dig in and interrupt power or water service, it is restored at your cost. Be sure to call ahead. //