

Check Out What Is In Store And On The Floor

(NAPSA)—This year, homeowners looking for ways to change their living spaces are taking inspiration from the great outdoors.

Whether soft or hard surface, Mother Nature is definitely influencing the look of flooring today.

Contrasting Textures Are On Trend

One of the latest styles growing in popularity is termed “rustic elegance.” The look consists of both raw and refined materials displayed together. Organic elements including hardwood and stone receive added dimension and beauty when juxtaposed with highly trendy porcelain tiles made to look like stratified rock and burnished, smooth metal. Another look growing in popularity is rustic, industrial concrete, commonly associated with outdoor spaces, paired with smooth alabaster marble, glass and other glossy materials.

Colors Are Quiet Patterns, Dramatic

In all its many shades, gray has become the new beige. Combined with the weathered looks are hues that range from desert to ocean. These calming colors bring warmth and character to interiors.

Meanwhile, eye-catching, oversized geometrics and classic patterns larger in scale than normal are popular in carpeting, rugs and tiles.

What It All Means For Your Floors

Here's how the latest looks are translated in each flooring category:

- New technology and digital imaging deliver high-quality **laminates** that put their natural cousins, including hardwood and marble, to the test. Laminate today is highly durable, offers photo-real imaging and enhanced sound absorption, is easy to maintain and, best of all, very affordable!

- **Porcelain tile** today can also look like fabric, metal, even concrete. Long-lasting and affordable tile is always in style. Intricate geometric patterns and mosaics found throughout history are now on tiles in dozens of shapes that



Photo Credit: White Oak Solstice Carpet

Carpets today offer beautiful natural looks typically only associated with hard surfaces like stone in luxuriously soft and durable fibers.

come in all sizes. Even the warmth and natural texture of wood can be convincingly re-created in tile for kitchens and bathrooms.

- If it's **stone** you seek, here's something that could rock your world. Stone may be an old building material but it's getting a new look with unique shapes, etched surfaces, and pairings with other material—both natural and man-made, including glass, hardwood and burnished metal.

- **Hardwood** floors remain popular amidst changing trends. According to the National Association of Realtors, 54 percent of homebuyers would pay more for houses with hardwood floors. Rugged and warm browns from ebony to leather to honey golden are all in, but for different reasons. Dark floors make a bold statement and help highlight a room's other features; lighter ones are easier to maintain. Understated, weathered gray and muted metallic shades offer a great base and mask imperfections and dirt so they're good for high-traffic areas. Flax, blond and whitewash add light and modernity.

Planks salvaged from old beams and antique flooring, or logs reclaimed from rivers and lakes, are in high demand and short supply, so costs can be high. For a similar effect at a lower price, you can try hand-scraped or machine-distressed woods.

If a patterned wood floor pleases you, good news: Mosaics and parquet designs are back in fashion and are available at most

price points and in styles to appeal to every taste, from modern to vintage.

- Versatile **vinyl** is more durable, more affordable and easier to maintain than any other flooring. Yet with today's advanced photographic and embossing technology, vinyl can be made to look like anything from reclaimed boat wood planks to stone slate tiles. Vinyl is naturally water resistant, making maintenance as easy as a quick mopping, and unyielding against scratches, stains, dents and scuffs. Vinyl is also easy to install, even over existing flooring.

- Sustainable and eco-friendly **cork** and **rubber** offer classic looks, comfort underfoot, acoustic qualities and inherent antimicrobial protection.

- Legend has it that Cleopatra presented herself to Julius Caesar rolled in a rug. Today, top clothing designers are basing the latest fashions on fabrics and motifs usually found on the floor. One reason may be the beautiful colors, patterns and textures that **rugs** and **carpets** can come in. In addition to the classic looks, distressed and striated patterns are popping up in almost every collection. These patterns are very forgiving when it comes to dirt and blemishes. And the distressed looks—well, they're already distressed, so you don't have to worry about added wear from your family.

The influence from nature is also seen in carpets. From actual natural materials such as wool and sisal to nature-inspired patterns—including animal prints, insect wings and layered rock looks—if you're a nature lover, you'll likely fall for today's soft floors.

Some of today's carpets and rugs even boast permanent, built-in stain resistance that never washes or wears off and man-made fibers that offer the look of wool with the durability and price of nylon.

Learn More

The World Floor Covering Association has more information on all these trends. Visit www.WFCA.org.