

# embracing MOTHER NATURE

## interior décor trends mirror green movement

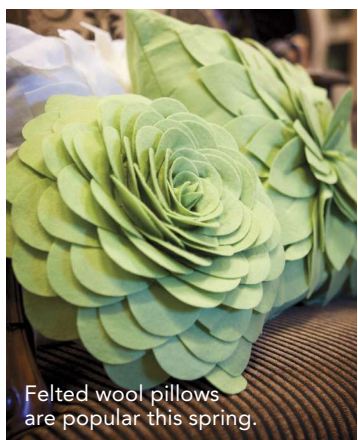
By Nan Bauroth Photos by Jessica Milligan

NATURAL, LIVABLE, LASTING. These watchwords embody interior design trends that local experts are projecting this year. "The whole green craze is coming to interior design in fabrics and other elements," says Beth Taflinger, owner of Casual Elegance, a home décor and gift shop in Blakeney. "We're seeing natural fabrics such as linen and jute." Lamps with shades fashioned of burlap, along with moss-covered objects, are also selling well.

Paula Tompkins, owner/designer of Creative by Nature HOME in Blakeney, whose store is premised on interior décor rooted in natural elements, agrees that the movement away from synthetic materials has gained momentum.

"Customers like natural fabrics because they feel real and are comfortable," Tompkins says. "People connect to these more than something artificial." The pillows and tabletop linens she's carrying are covered in natural textiles. "Burlap is popular, and felted wool is going to be big, as are linen and cotton."

Environmental awareness has spawned another trend Tompkins recently saw in Paris. "It's called 'Up-purposing.' They take a basic material and elevate it into a decorative object," she says. Two examples she sells are lightweight bowls made from concrete



Felted wool pillows are popular this spring.



Paula Tompkins creates an arrangement with natural dried flowers.

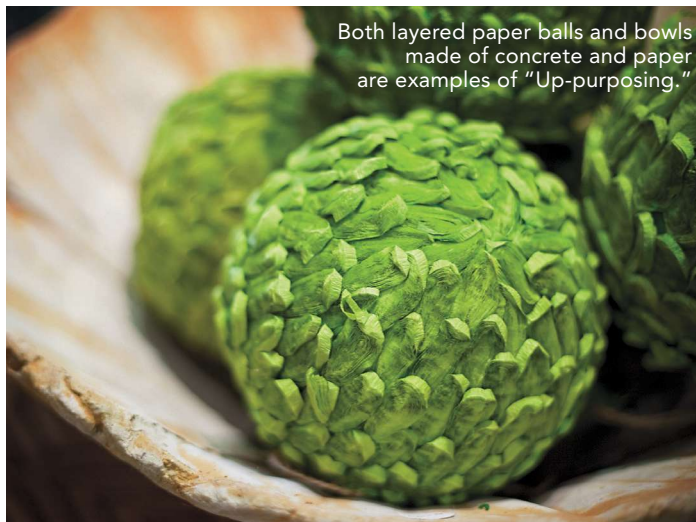
and paper and decorative balls covered in layered paper.

A related trend Tompkins says is just beginning to hit Charlotte is the industrial look. "You'll see it in small sculptured items such as wheels and gears, and replicas of manufacturing tools." She cites industrial-looking shelves on wheels, which are attracting customers.

### Variety of Textures

Mixing textures in room décor to impart a more natural impression is also in vogue. "We're seeing many fabrics introduced with subtle textures," says Brock McLendon, president of Brock Moran Home in Ballantyne Village, whose lifestyle store is noted for its custom interior design services.

McLendon, who features a fresh, clean look in his furniture lines and interior décor, says



Both layered paper balls and bowls made of concrete and paper are examples of "Up-purposing."



that although his style leans toward neutrals overall, he insists on appropriate use of contrasting textures. Wall coverings are an example of this new direction. “Heavily textured solid wall coverings are something everyone wants to use,” he says. “Grass cloth is one key area for us right now.”

The desire for a variety of textures extends to the bedroom and bath. “Mixing textures is important for the look and feel of a bed,” says Sally Southern, manager of DeWoolfson Linens in StoneCrest, a shop specializing in locally manufactured goose-down comforters, pillows and featherbeds, as well as fine European linens for bedroom and bath. “Some people are very tactile — texture is a sense we all have,” Southern says. “You want to love the feel of the fabrics on your bed.”

To achieve a natural feel where they sleep, people are getting less fussy about their beds. “They want fewer pillows, and although there is still a place for the gathered bed skirt, the trend is to take bed skirts off,” Southern reports. Instead, customers choose fabric headboards, as well as wraparound bed frames with sideboards and footboard, which create a cleaner look. “Manufacturers today are very aware of the American market’s taste, creating more iron and wooden bed frames that are transitional and modern in appearance,” she says.

## Livability

Livability is the second force driving interior décor. “People are designing their home more for lifestyle living than just to have it decorated,” asserts Carolyn Galloway, current president of the

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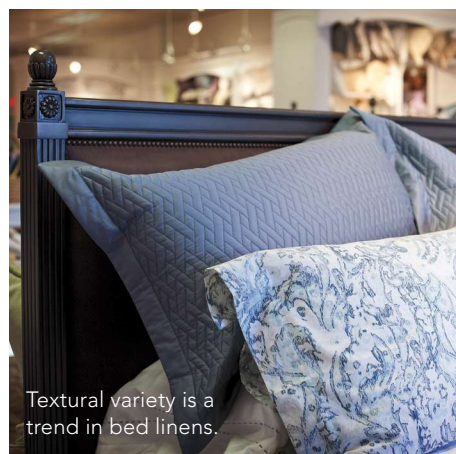
Lamps with rattan latticework and shades of brushed suede feature a natural look.

“Some people are very tactile — texture is a sense we all have.”

— Sally Southern



A tangerine bedroom shawl accents a boudoir pillow.



Textural variety is a trend in bed linens.



Store Manager Sally Southern mixes aubergine and botanical-inspired pillows.



Even bath hand towels reflect the green influence.

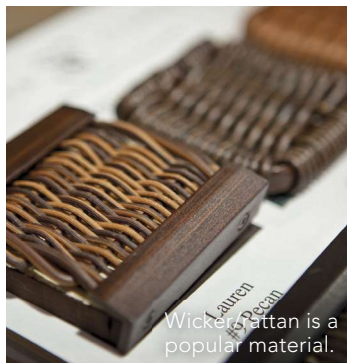




Whimsical sundials and bird baths are showing up more in outdoor spaces.

Interior Design Society and owner of Decorating Den in Mint Hill. "People don't have rooms they don't use, such as a formal dining room. They use space wisely and make it all very comfortable."

As one example, her clients are opting for lighter furniture. "We



Wicker rattan is a popular material.

have highly mobile communities and lighter weight pieces are easier to move," Galloway explains. "Homeowners are also choosing lighter weight fabrics, with a preference for slipcovers, which are easy to clean. With so many homeowners having children and pets, people are conscious of everything in their home being highly livable."

Another decorating concept among her younger clients is leveraging room space through off-the-floor servers, which stand on legs, or floating shelves to showcase porcelain and bric-a-brac instead of immense china cabinets.



Decorative lanterns can provide a finishing touch.

Flooring is also feeling the impact of the livability factor. "Hardwood is so in, even in master bedrooms," says Margi Kyle, past national chairman of the Interior Design Society and owner of The Designing Doctor, a Cornelius interior design firm. Instead of laminates, however, the trend is a return to natural hardwoods. "Before, people were afraid they would dent and mark," she notes. "But now they realize there is a charm to real wood. It feels solid."

Making a home livable includes the outdoor space as well. "The indoor-space look is moving outside," says Carole Sackowitz, co-owner of Today's Outdoor Living in Blakeney Crossing, which carries patio furniture, grills and pool accessories.

In particular, people are ditching old-line patio seating. "We've gone from plain metal chairs to sofas with cushions," she says, adding that customers want outdoor furniture to be as comfortable as that indoors. "Technology is also making outdoor furniture that lasts longer, and requires much less maintenance."

Homeowners want their outdoor space to have the same detailed look as that of their indoor décor, which means quality components. To meet this need, Sackowitz offers natural stone tabletops, polished granite benches and functional decorative accessories such as lanterns and plant stands. "Customers like to have the whole thing color coordinated to give it that finished look," she says.

## Good for a Lifetime

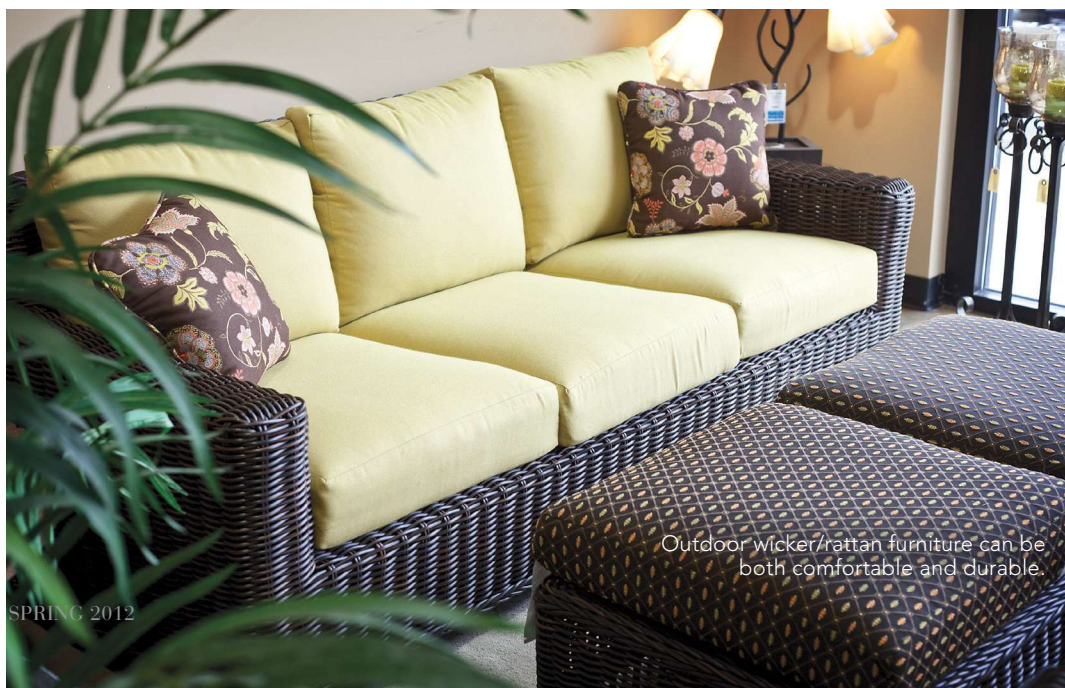
The desire for things that last is a third trend in home décor influenced by the environment and economy. "Consumers are loosening up their purse strings, but they are still cautious, so they

"The indoor-space look is moving outside."

— Carole Sackowitz



Outdoor fabrics today are available in a wide variety of choices.



Outdoor wicker/rattan furniture can be both comfortable and durable.



are looking for things they will like for a long time and have lasting value," says Tompkins.

That includes furniture that can have a dual purpose. Tompkins points to a cabinet with louvered doors that could be placed in a bedroom, beach house, great room or porch. The ability to customize furniture is also in demand, so she offers 60 different finishes for a variety of cabinets, hutches, tables and other pieces. Each can be individually tailored, such as a sideboard with white distressed legs and driftwood top.

The desire for individuality is being reflected even in table settings. The wedding and gift registry at Brock Moran Home has seen a boom in brides and grooms choosing monogrammed fine china from Pickard's Signature line. "Monogramming is a big trend that will continue for some time," McLendon observes.

## Color Pop

The "it" fashion color for 2012 is Tangerine Tango, a saucy, bright red-orange that experts say can be introduced into rooms featuring a neutral palette through a small accent piece, such as a vase, pillow, throw, table linens or chair seat cover.

At the same time, a desire for blues and grays is emerging. "The gray blues are coming in, as is the purple family, including aubergine (dark purple)," says Southern, who is featuring a transitional gray-blue iron bed with headboard upholstered in textured slate gray leather, outfitted in sheets dappled like a modernist painting in subtle tones of blue and sterling. "I'm selling six different shades of gray in bedding this spring, including platinum and silver," she notes.

# The "it" fashion color for 2012 is Tangerine Tango.



Homeowners are spicing up neutral tones with splashes of tangerine.



Mixing clear crystal with pewter-footed goblets is new for tabletops.



Emerging home-furniture designs showcase natural colors such as zinc, cappuccino and ebony.



Brides and grooms are selecting monogrammed china.

## RUN YOUR HOME VIA IPAD APP

Home electronics used to mean big-screen TVs and audio systems. Today, it also means total control of your home via an iPad or other device.

Ron Jones, president of Infinite Audio and Theater in Rea Village, says the hottest trend in his business is the amazing home automation app created by Savant Systems.

The app transforms an Apple

iPad, iPhone, iPod Touch or HDTV into a personalized control portal — becoming your virtual light switch, thermostat, personal media player, security camera, as well as your on/off, open/close, up/down button from just about anywhere in the world.

Jones says one of his customers was concerned his son wasn't turning off the TV at



Photo courtesy of Savant Systems.

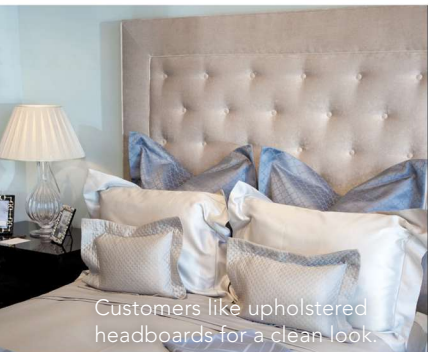
**Savant's home-automation app will run on a variety of devices.**

9 p.m. Now, with one touch from afar, he can flick the set off. So much for being home alone.




McLendon echoes her sentiment. A steel-blue colored sofa in his showroom at Brock Moran Home is drawing raves, as are two upholstered beds paired with linens in steel-blue and pewter tones. The cool color trend in his shop extends to tabletop settings, with finer collections, such as those by Bernardaud, introducing platinum, gray and silver into their designs.

Ultimately, however, homeowners should go for whatever colors make them happy. "How you feel in your home is how you feel in the outside world," says Kyle, who specializes in décor color. "I would rather see owners do what makes them feel good in their house. If in 10 years they decide to move, they will have to make changes anyway."



Customers like upholstered headboards for a clean look.

She suggests homeowners fearful of adding color dip their toes in by painting their smallest space, like a powder room. Another trick: "Your ceiling is a fifth wall. If you want to paint just one wall, then paint the ceiling," Kyle says.

In the end, a home should be livable, comfortable and a place people want to nest. As Kyle sums it up, "Ten years ago it was 'Home, Sweet Home.' Then after 9/11 it was 'Home, Safe Home.' Today in this economy, it's 'Home, Cherished Home.' We want to appreciate what we have." 

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