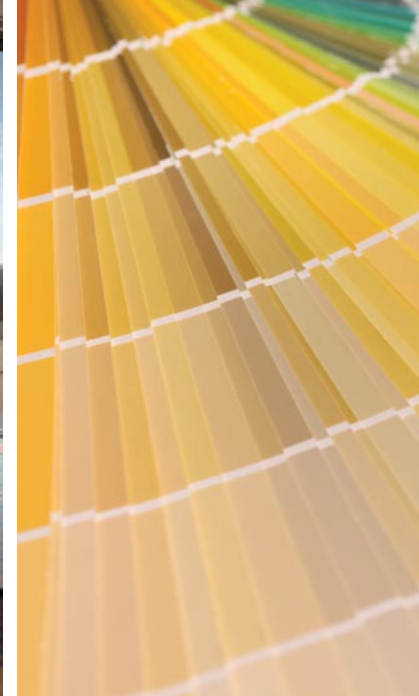


Finding the right colors for you and your home

Looking to bring some color into your environment, but not sure where to start? Try your closet, suggests color consultant Nada Rutka.



People’s color and texture preferences often are revealed in their clothing and accessory choices. “What colors do you want to be surrounded by?” Rutka asks. “Go to your closet and observe what colors you gravitate toward. Find a scarf or something else you love and pull colors from there.”

Rutka also suggests keeping a file of appealing pictures clipped from magazines. Over time, she says, you likely will see a pattern of color preferences. Or observe the colors in your favorite restaurant or coffee shop. Chances are you’ll feel comfortable with those colors in your home as well.



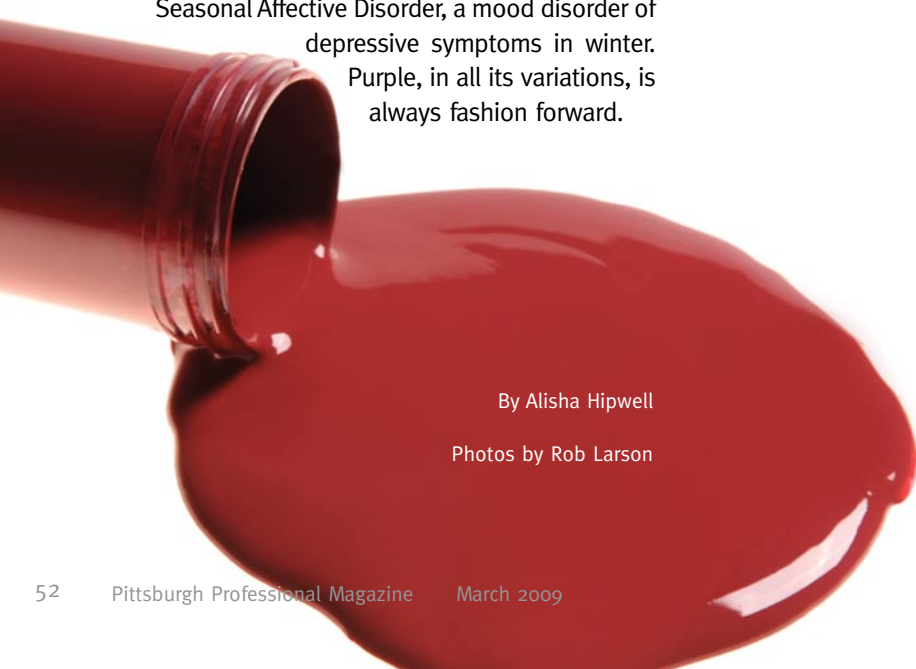
For many homeowners, color selection is a daunting task. But Rutka says it needn’t be that way, if consumers take the time to understand color and its effect on them and their environment.

In coming months, Rutka expects the sour economy to notably influence color, with consumers on both coasts turning toward neutral and stone colors in a mix of grays and browns. Safe and secure vegetal colors are likely to be popular in Middle America.

Orange hues, for example, encourage sociability and work well in dining rooms. Blues are relaxing and calming and appropriate in bedrooms. Greens tend to appeal to everyone because they’re “nature’s neutral,” while cheery yellows can help those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder, a mood disorder of depressive symptoms in winter.

But you’ll still see pops of luminous color and shots of metallic, anything but flat color. Rutka predicts texture and finish will be as important as color itself.

Purple, in all its variations, is always fashion forward.



By Alisha Hipwell

Photos by Rob Larson



She also expects more floral patterns in the next few years, a reflection of Americans' ongoing interest in gardening and the environment. "We're moving away from a harder-edged, industrial style. We're going from a very hard edge in society to a softer discourse. That's going to be reflected in colors and finishes," she says.

Though she's in the business of forecasting color trends, Rutka believes homeowners should have what they like, whether it's "in" or not. These days that's easier than ever. "Our choices now are so vast that people can really shape their environment the way they want and the way that's comfortable for them. And that's how it should be."



Here are some of Rutka's tips for experimenting with color:

- Most paint companies now offer their products in small packets or cans, so you can try a color with minimal investment. And their websites often offer features that allow you to try various colors on the walls of a "virtual room."

- Unsure about a color? Paint a large piece of foam core and hang it on the wall. Be sure to leave the sample up for several days because color looks different in varying light.

- Attracted to bold color? Try it in the powder room. It's less overwhelming in a smaller space and in rooms where no one stays very long. Kitchens are another good place to try bolder, more intense color because they typically have less wall space than other rooms.

- Bedrooms are a great place to be adventurous with color but avoid bright or luminous colors. They inhibit restfulness.

- Use warm colors in rooms that always seem colder than others, and use cool color schemes in warmer rooms like those they receive the afternoon sun.

- Color isn't limited to paint. Bring color into your environment through furnishings, accessories, and artwork. Small items like toss pillows are a great way to introduce color. Or try strong color on focal points in a room, such as a couch. 📌

