

Bonnie Krims

as seen in:

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writinghome

Choosing Exterior Paint

Q I've had the worst luck choosing exterior paint colors for my home. The colors never look anything like they do on the paint chips, and I can't seem to predict how they will look on the house. What's wrong?
—Tim Anderson, Sacramento, California

A "Colors behave differently outside than inside," says Bonnie Krims, author of *The Perfectly Painted House* (Rockport, 2002). "The size of the surface on which the paint is applied is the biggest difference. You may want a pale blue house, but if you paint what seems to be pale blue on 3,000 square feet, it could end up looking bright blue." As a rule, exterior paint colors should be more

subdued than interior ones. For example, if you want to paint your home's exterior red, opt for a barn-type red, which is tempered and subdued compared to the bright cherry reds you may see in a dining room—this automatically narrows down the number of paint chips that need to be considered for exteriors. Buy quarts of paint, or sample sizes if available, and test the colors on the house in a discreet location. It's the only way to know for sure whether the resulting color will be right for you (and your neighborhood).

Staining Wood Floors

Q My husband and I want to replace our kitchen linoleum and family room carpet. The rooms are

connected, so we're thinking a wood surface in a shade of gray, preferably five-inch-wide planks. Can you help?
—Cindy Musa, Sterling, Virginia

A There is no wood flooring that is naturally gray, so you'll need to select a wood floor and have it stained. Try Cabot's interior oil-based wood stain in Cape Cod Gray (800-877-8246, cabotstains.com), which is appropriate for pine, fir, western red cedar, and eastern white cedar floors. You could always go custom with a flooring specialty company like Stoddard, New Hampshire-based Carlisle Wide Plank Floors (800-595-9663, wideplankflooring.com). They offer 15 types of wood flooring options in widths from 4 to 20 inches, and a slew of stains. Specify what you want, and they will make it happen.

Removing Heat Stains

Q Time after time my family has placed hot pizza boxes on my oak dining table. I've tried everything from the mayonnaise treatment to a variety of polishes and oils to diminish the appearance of the four white, hazy blotches. Help!
—Martine Horne, Green Bay, Wisconsin

A "The age of the finish, not the furniture, is critical," says Bob Flexner, author of *Understanding Wood Finishing* (Reader's Digest, 1999). "Newer, more flexible finishes are much easier to repair than older ones." (Typically, a finish is considered old if it's been around at least 20 years.) Flexner suggests three possible solutions for spot repairs, but unfortunately there are no guarantees. You can wipe the surface with a cloth lightly dampened with standard rubbing alcohol; gently rub the stained area until it's shiny with grade 0000 steel wool; or have a professional spray on a coat of butyl cellosolve to dissolve the finish. For best results,

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