

# BLUES ARE RED HOT

Muted colors top the list as consumers seek to create calm, nurturing environments.

Americans love the blues. This year they're looking to create an atmosphere of harmony and tranquility in their homes, and blue delivers. In Ace Hardware's 2011 consumer color preference study, blues and neutrals were the clear winners, followed by whites and greens (see chart for all results). Blues even showed up as tints in other color families, lending cool tones to greens, whites and grays.

The top three blues are soft, pale shades that convey a sense of calm as well as sophistication. "Pale colors create a serene environment in which people can de-stress and feel comfortable," says Janet Davidson, marketing manager. "This year, the top picks in all the color families, including reds and purples, were subtle and muted."

"It's about creating warmth without weight," says Davidson. We developed our new Clark+Kensington™ paint with this kind of sensibility in mind. The palette is understated, and it's clear from the survey results that consumers are drawn to these types of colors. They want to surround themselves with colors that are nurturing and at the same time optimistic, and desaturated colors are ideal for that purpose." Another benefit of a restrained palette is that the colors are compatible, she says, "so that no matter which Clark+Kensington colors you combine, the result will be balanced and harmonious."



## BLUES

Ethereal, delicate, barely there. The most popular blues are airy and light, blues that veer close to neutrals. These are the colors of sea and sky, renewed and ready to bring the outdoors in. Clear Day and Ocean Breeze share a weightless luminosity that creates a sense of space. Bringing a little more depth and color, Mystical builds a transition from lighter to darker hues. Blues like these are at home in every room.



## NEUTRALS

Today's neutrals are dusted with shades of every color. Bucking the trend toward lighter hues, the warm beige of Toast and Honey took the top spot in this palette. Pink-tinged Fairy Wings and celadon-inspired Spring Glow were also in the top four, along with Inspire Awe, a pale dove gray whose low intensity makes it the perfect partner for other colors.



## WHITES

Preferred whites would be just as comfortable in the blue family, like sea-glass-tinged Stolen Moments or the canvas white of Ships Sail. Top-ranked Sandpoint brings a slightly more saturated look to the whites with its beach-beige depth. The deliciously named Vanilla Latte is a classic warm white, while Designer White exemplifies the color with its hints of violet, blue, green and gray.



## GREENS

These are the colors of nature, restful yet full of life. Mid-toned Dark Pine projects a sense of calm and confidence, a perfect anchor for the washed aqua of Seafoam and the lightest kiss of leafy green in Casual Day. Greens go anywhere: as an accent in the living room, a wash of color in the bedroom, or a quiet backdrop in the dining room.



## GRAYS

Pearly, watercolor shades update the new grays and cultivate a cool sophistication. Oyster Pearl and Coastal Pleasure surge with a tidepool translucence, while blue-tinged Outdoor Cafe speaks of bleached summer skies. These grays, comfortable everywhere, foster tranquility and balance.



## YELLOWS

While most of the top-ranked colors featured blue undertones, when it comes to yellow, sunny hues put the blues in the shade. Favorite yellows Cashmere Sweater and Ice Cream Sundae are sun-warmed lemons ripe for picking. Butterfly tends toward caramel fudge, buttery with a hint of burnt sugar. These are yellows to warm the heart and the home, bringing a touch of sun to a foyer or playfulness to a child's room.



## REDS

Today's reds are chili peppers without the heat, toned down but still with plenty of pep. Colors with food-related names like Smoked Paprika, Port of Bordeaux and Gooseberry led the pack. These are reds with style, reds that are lush yet livable, just vibrant enough to infuse environments with a shot of color that turns the heat down a notch and delivers steady warmth.



## BROWNS

The most popular browns evoked comfort food like Caramel Ganache and Oatmeal Cookie. These are mid-toned browns, strong enough to assert themselves but warm and approachable. Oak Terrace tones down the warmth with a grey cast, ensuring that it blends well as part of a warm or a cool palette.



## ORANGES

Oranges have declared themselves the new neutrals. Sandy shades like Cameo and Sweet Potato Pie are enlivened with a touch of cheerful orange. Palest pink brings a burst of cool to the mellow oranges of Lobster Bisque and Bridal Bouquet. Autumn Ground, the darkest of the preferred shades, brings to mind the dusty copper of grape leaves in the fall. For an accent that harmonizes yet holds its own, muted orange provides plenty of zest.



## PURPLES

Niche colors are emerging as the perfect accent to any room. In 2012, nearly 20 percent of homeowners are looking to niche colors like light purples to add a touch of the exotic to their home. Colors like Serendipity and Purple Lady provide punch without overwhelming. Dusty lavenders and ethereal violets combine softness and sophistication to create an atmosphere of luxurious calm, particularly suited to bedrooms.

## HOW YOU VOTED

