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## Designers see a warming trend in today's palates

By Meg Barone

Autumn is set to don its foliage, although no one can predict exactly how colorful this season's leaves will be, since we had such an anomalous winter, spring and summer with warmer-than-usual temperatures and drought-like conditions. Still, as the NewEngland.com website says, "Mother Nature has the best box of crayons," and many people are hoping she gives us a spectacular fiery display of vermilions, yellows, oranges and reds.

In Fairfield County, the leaves color may be vibrant but the colors are generally more subdued for interior walls, often leaning to the neutral palette. But don't be surprised to see pops of brilliant color in the accent pieces that are paired with the warmer tones of the sand-gray or taupe-gray walls, according to Fairfield County designers, who have their fingers on the pulse of the color wheel.

George Snead, lead designer of Wakefield Design Center in Stamford, said he still sees interest in orange for accent pieces, which includes drapery, chairs, pillows, lamps, artwork, and other room accessories. "We're really strong with orange. It never seems to die. It's not tangerine, not a brick or a rust but a soft orange," Snead said.



The wall between the kitchen and dining room was removed to create one large area to increase the feeling of openness, traffic flow and views to the outdoors.

Lynn Hoffman/Contributed photo

or red-brown woods; rather they are leaning toward ash, pecan, “and anything that is cerused”

– that is a technique in which wood is wire-brushed and then painted to enhance the wood grain.

Snead sees a warming of the neutral background colors as well. While some accent colors are vivid, other people are going for mushroom, charcoal and amber, he said.

Krupa sees interest in a more intense palette including lavender, deep eggplant, raspberry and a bit of teal. Snead has also seen blues heading in the direction of deep turquoise and teal, a reference to modern jewel tones, he said.

Several designers said plum is still “in,” and not just as an interior accent color. Pratt said she uses it for front doors. “It’s a warm take on the traditional dark door, which you often see in black, blue and hunter green. The plum is a fun twist but from the street it still looks presentable,” she said.

Exterior house color is trending away from white with dark shutters to grays or light colors or light-stained woods with contrast color in the trim, Pratt said.

Back inside, Pratt said wallpaper is also making a comeback, and she sees people doing bold things with paper patterns. “It’s not just Plain Jane prints. They’re making an artistic statement in their home whether it’s paper on one wall, the ceiling or all walls.

Another trend Pratt sees is “monochromatic everything” in bold colors. One house in Westport that was on the 2015 Near & Far Aid Designer House Tour features a game room with walls covered in Navy blue Phillip Jeffries Lacquered Strie wallpaper, and a closely matched blue flat paint color decorates the ceiling. Additionally, the billiard table is also covered in blue felt, rather than the typical green.

Even with the gray tones, people want to stay modern and monochromatic but still add interest

to their house palette, Pratt said. “They’re going for more color on the walls because it’s less expensive to change the wall color than it is to replace the furniture,” she said, adding that it’s also easier to switch out accent pieces or change the decor to reinvent a room.

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Beth Krupa, of Beth Krupa Interiors in Stamford, said red is an important global color in many cultures and that is not likely to change. In fact, she said, color forecasters are telling designers to expect it to emerge in 2017. Her clients prefer a neutral palette with red as an accent color rather than as a dominant color.

"We pride ourselves in being timeless but people want to know what's fresh and emerging," Krupa said.

For the last six years or so true grays were all the rage inside and out. Krupa still sees interest in gray as an exterior

color with white trim. Inside wall colors are getting warmer, even though gray is the predominant hue.

Color Specialist Kimberly Pratt, of Kimberly Ann Interiors in Greenwich, said in the last year there has been a lot of white and high contrast; however, people are returning to more natural and neutral colors. While the walls are still in the gray tones, Pratt said wall color is trending toward gray-beige or sand-gray, as some people call it. You're also likely to see more green-gray or silver sage. Blue-gray is also popular, she said. It's gray undertones instead of true grays, which are definitely on their way out, Pratt said.

"We are moving away from the cool grays to the warm taupe-y grays," Snead said. "It's not that people have to change what they have, if they have Carrara (marble) and chrome. This trend allows you to mix metals and move into a warmer palette across the color line," he said.

Lynn Hoffman, of Lynn Hoffman Design in Stamford, said taupe is definitely coming back, which is great for homeowners because it's an easy color to work with. It's a flexible color that can be paired with almost any color and it looks good all over a house, she said.

Snead said some variation of citrine and acid green pairs especially well with the taupe-gray color.

This year's trending grays could apply to every aesthetic, although Snead said they work best with cleaner modern classic decor, specifically with Mid-Century Modern.

The warmer colors do not just apply to paint but also to wood tones. Snead said people are not going for the yellow mahoganies

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Krupa said they can add that interest not just in color but in texture, too. “When you go monochromatic it’s important to go with more textures in a room design,” she said.

While new colors emerge every season, and some paint companies select a Color of the Year, the designers said there are no hard and fast design rules. People aren’t required to follow the trends. They may have their own aesthetic and favorite colors. Or they just may be that person who marches to the beat of a different drummer. Krupa recommends people ask themselves how they want to feel in a particular space, which will influence their choice of colors, textures, and accents.

*Meg Barone is a freelance writer for Hearst Connecticut Media.*



Kimberly Ann Interiors/Contributed photo

Beth Krupa/Contributed photo

