

## DECOR

## Great floor as design foundation

There's a wide range of options — but choose wisely

Some possibilities: exotic hardwood, bamboo, stone

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OPINION BY MAIL

There are certain design elements in your home that serve as an anchor. Flooring is often overlooked as a key design component and definitely requires serious consideration.

Whether you decide on tiles, ceramic or marble, stone, wood or wood laminates, careful planning is needed.

"It's the hardest thing to replace, so it's a good idea to go relatively neutral in your colour palette," says interior designer Eric McClelland of Toronto's Fleur de la Interior Designs.

"Most importantly, this is not the feature that you should economize savings," adds McClelland, who is also guest designer on the CityLine show on Citytv. "You don't want to be unhappy with your choice after two years."

When it comes to woods, there is a trend toward exotic hardwoods from Africa and South America, like jatoba, caribean, gomerita and mistralino.

Exotic woods can be inconsistent in their colouring. "However, that inconsistency is quite a big trend, especially if you're going to the whole main floor of your house in wood," says McClelland.

"To have it all one colour is kind of boring. The lovely feature of these exotic woods is they naturally have variations in them, so it adds character."

"Another natural product that is quite popular is bamboo. "Some people have trouble with it, because it's quite soft and you need to buy a decent quality — go with a solid bamboo," says McClelland. "There is a beautiful new strip bamboo that you can stain in different colours that is distributed by The Sullivan Source Inc. It's gorgeous."

McClelland has been known to run wood throughout his clients' houses from the front halls, into the living room, dining room, even the kitchen.

"It's very useful to be sensitive to the overall design and create patterns," suggests McClelland. "You don't want to run a wood in



"Break it up. Change the direction. Floor patterns are important," says interior designer Eric McClelland. This living room floor features brown limestone and diagonal walnut.

one direction throughout the entire house. Break it up. Change the direction. Floor patterns are important."

Another trend today is a move toward darker woods, but McClelland cautions that going too dark can be impractical.

"We try to advise people to stay away from any red tones — otherwise, you'll need to counter

certainly remain a favourite in today's flooring.

"Something that people need to really bear in mind when it comes to tiles, is that most ceramic tile only costs a few dollars less than a natural product like slate, marble or limestone. From a resale value, real stone gives a better look. The reality is that it costs \$10 a square foot to

lay any tile. So if you install a \$2 ceramic tile versus a \$4 slate tile, it's \$12 instead of \$14. People always look at it from the cost of material. The cost of stone is in the labour."

If stone is more to your liking, make sure it has beautiful veining and colouring. Caramelized teak, the greys married with white veins running through, gives the stone a livelier look. Another option McClelland recommends is honed marble and granite. The trend now is for dull finish opposed to shiny. And if your space is small, match the floor to your countertops.

"Remember that consistency

in colour always makes the space look bigger," says McClelland. And don't be afraid to mix it up, he advises. "We've even done stone insets in the centre of wood floors, making sure the materials are flush, so instead of having carpeting in your dining room, you have a marble inset where your table sits."

If function is a determining factor when selecting flooring for your laundry room and basement, look at rubber products, vinyl floors, Tufflex in exercise rooms, cork and even floating floors in wood.

Selecting the right flooring can determine the overall atmosphere of your home.

Flooring should be viewed as an investment and one of the most important elements your furniture and design will be based on.

## SOURCES

► Eric McClelland, interior designer, Fleur de la Interior Design, 416-928-8599  
www.fleurdeila.com  
► The Sullivan Source Inc., 100 J. Island Rd., 416-538-6336

the red in your colour scheme."

Instead, McClelland suggests walnut, anything that has a bit more brown in it. That way, if you're putting a carpet or furniture on it, your floor becomes a neutral palette that grounds your whole colour scheme, allowing you to go off in various directions.

Tiles are another option and



This foyer features jatoba wood inset in limestone. "The lovely feature of these exotic woods is they naturally have variations in them, so it adds character," Eric McClelland says.

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