



PHOTO CREDIT Larry Arnal

# SPA-LICIOUS!

// BY PAUL SEMKULEY

**THERE IS NOTHING MORE RELAXING** than having a warm bath in a serene environment; blue sky above, greenery and flowers surrounding you and a view that takes your breath away. But wait! You open your eyes and you realize that you're not in some lush tropical locale, but in your own bathtub, at home, within four walls. Ugh, Calgon take me away!

Upgrading your bathroom often yields a return of 100 per cent or more for sellers. It also adds value to how you presently live in your home, as it helps you maintain the space, keeping it current and new.

So where does one begin? Firstly consider that the functionality of the room is totally different from any other room, with the least amount of space to work with (unless your ensuite is the size of a double-car garage!). It must offer comfort, convenience, safety and utility of the room. Are you a lounge-bather or a shower staller? Either one is great, but if you're not likely to take baths then I would recommend not including a tub. Once you have decided what best suits your lifestyle, this will help you determine the types of plumbing fixtures you will need.

Next to consider, would you like your bathroom to be transitional or more modern and sleek? Keep in mind that your bathrooms still need to flow with the rest of the home. If they stand out too much, there is a big disconnect to the rest of the space.

One thing is for certain – use a close-grained plywood and hardwood like birch, maple or poplar for the cabinetry. MDF is fine for painted cabinetry, but it won't hold up to the humidity and moisture that a bathroom will bring.

When choosing tiles, stick to floor tiles that are honed of ceramic or porcelain composition, or natural stone that doesn't become slippery when

wet. There's nothing worse than doing a pirouette and wiping out in your new bathroom.

The tiles should also be a proper dimension – too big and they will overpower the room. Smaller-sized tiles are best kept in the wet/shower areas to contain them, so the space doesn't look too busy.

If you're cold after taking a bath or shower, have an under-tile heating system installed to provide additional warmth underfoot, all year round.

Wall tiles walls can be polished and be used to create a simple pattern, or larger sizes to create the illusion of full slabs of stone.

Not all the walls in the bathroom need to be tiled, either. Those that are not in a wet area, I love to use a commercial vinyl wall-covering which are mould and water resistant, and bring a different texture to the room. This is especially great to do in a condo where you may only have one bathroom, giving the space added panache and style, where it will be used as a powder room too.

Like other rooms in your home, the bathroom furniture needs to be to scale, particularly for smaller condos. A floating tub is beautiful but requires plenty of room around it, so it doesn't look like it's too big for the room. If it is, opt out and consider making the shower area larger, adding in a steam component, and then allowing enough room for a bench so that you can sit back relax and enjoy the benefits of steam.

I also like to design and include a vanity that is not wall to wall, both in a house or condo, so it provides balance to the room and it looks like a beautiful piece of furniture that was made purposefully for the size of the room. It should have plenty of storage and counter space, so that everything is just a single reach away.

An upgraded, decked-out bathroom can bring you peace of mind, knowing that you can get a great return on your investment when you sell, and lift your spirits and renew your senses while you live there.

Here are some additional tips for beautifying your spa-licious bathroom:

#### TIPS

- › Vanity heights should be between 32 and 36 inches
- › Sconces should be placed on either side of a mirror for best lighting; 60 to 72 inches up from the floor, and the distance between them between 36 and 40 inches.
- › Towel bars mounted at a height of 48 inches
- › Treat and seal natural stone tiles yearly to prevent water damage and staining
- › Showerheads are best on a bar that allows the fixture to slide up and down; maximum height of the showerhead itself should be between 77 and 81 inches
- › Built-in shower benches need to be 17 to 19 inches in height with a depth of 15 inches
- › Clearance in front of any piece of furniture in the room is minimum 30 inches



PHOTO CREDIT Joe Saraceno

#### Paul Semkuley at the Fall Home Show

**Paul Semkuley will be at the 26th annual Toronto Fall Home Show running Sept. 18 to 21 at the Better Living Centre, Exhibition Place. Get renovation advice from Paul on Sat., Sept. 20 and Sun., Sept. 21 at 11:30 a.m. Visit [fallhomeshow.com](http://fallhomeshow.com) for more details.**



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