

Wood Looks Good

While the possibilities for unique combinations are almost limitless, manufacturers concur that faux wood tile is still the most frequently requested design amongst homeowners. As with composite decking, using wood tile gives the appearance of a hardwood floor without worrying about warping, rotting, or any of the other aggravations associated with real wood.

“What was first introduced as a traditional take on hardwood floors has evolved to include more colors and textures to choose from than ever before,” says Kirk-Rolley. For example, Ragno USA (a Daltile brand) offers the Woodstyle Porcelain collection, which uses 3-D printing to achieve realistic graining and scraping effects for a warm ambience reminiscent of walnut.

An emerging movement within the wood tile sector, according to Ann Sacks’ DeeDee Gundberg, senior new product development program manager, is introducing a distressed-wood look for tile. Advanced printing techniques give these pieces the appearance of wood that has been weathered, aged, and even burnt.

And it’s not just the floor that’s getting the hardwood treatment—wood tiles are common on walls too, mostly in the kitchen and bathroom. As an added perk, wood tiles will better withstand the heavy traffic and high moisture prevalent in both rooms, where real wood wouldn’t last long. “Homeowners love being able to enjoy the style of wood in the bathroom,” Jensen says.

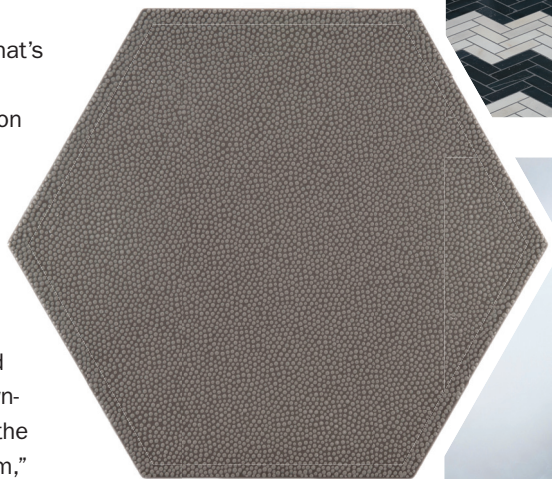


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New Ideas Shaping Up

Asking around reveals that homeowners are starting to think outside the box when it comes to tile shapes, and are looking for something that stands out. While squares, diamonds, and rectangles long reigned supreme, manufacturers are reporting increased interest in a wide array of geometrical designs.

“Traditionally, when considering tile for a project, remodelers would default to that subway-tile, mosaic-esque design,” says Sanchez. You may still find squares, rectangles, and other linear mosaic-type designs, he says, but they’re largely limited to backsplashes and



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Left: Hexagons are one of the most popular tile shapes today, followed closely by chevron patterns (top). Above: The Onyx collection from The-Size is one example of large-format tiles that create a more seamless look thanks to fewer grouting lines.