



PHOTOS COURTESY VICTORIA + ALBERT

Homeowners are using high-quality materials and high-end design — especially for bathtubs and sinks — to create beautiful, comfortable, spa-like bathrooms.

## Luxurious bathrooms are not just for spas

By Audrey Hoffer  
Special to The Washington Examiner

**T**he bathroom is where you are most relaxed — so why shouldn't it be a comfortable and beautiful space?

People are opting for higher-quality materials and more luxurious features, said Janet Bloomberg, an architect with KUBE Architecture. "They're picking fancy tile, stone and ceramics with pretty finishes for walls and floors; installing heated

toilets, towel bars and floors; purchasing elaborate tubs; and, ordering custom built-in cabinetry."

For tubs and sinks in particular, styles have changed.

"We see a lot of people tearing out their cast iron tubs and replacing them with larger, stand-alone sculptured pieces that can sit in the middle of the room," says Don Pannell, co-owner of soon-to-be opened (on March 29) LUX.

LUX offers freestanding tubs made of volcanic limestone that,

Pannell said, retain heat better than old-fashioned bathtubs. They are also more durable and pliable — so the shapes are more creative and evocative. The gentle curve of a slipper tub, for example, offers sexy sleekness that gives a bathroom an elegant air.

Freestanding tubs often have personal hand showers, but usually a separate shower is also desired. Fortunately, the chunky plastic shower doors that turned yellow with age have been replaced by semi-frameless glass walls. These modern showers curve and pivot on exposed carriers instead of on tracks that can collect soap and hard water deposits, said Michael Weaver of the 130-year-old, family-owned Georgetown business W.T. Weaver & Sons.

There is an expanding array of designs and materials for sinks. "Vessel sinks, which sit atop the counter, can be made of vitreous china, glass, stone or bronze," Weaver added. The faucets can be wall-mounted or come out of the vessel.

Don't overlook lighting, Bloomberg advised. "You always want dimmable, indirect light because it will soften the bathroom and create a more intimate feel." Glaring light can be unflattering and cast shadows.

"We're doing a bathroom now with a teakwood slatted ceiling and we'll install lights above the slats so that the ceiling will glow like the sun," she

### Resources

**W.T. Weaver & Sons**  
1208 Wisconsin Ave. NW in Georgetown  
202-333-4200  
[weaverhardware.com](http://weaverhardware.com)

**LUX stone + tile + bath**  
1821 14th St. NW  
**Grand Opening Gala**  
6 to 9 p.m. March 29  
RSVP 202.588.5630

**KUBE Architecture**  
1777 Church St. NW  
202-986-0573  
[kube-arch.com](http://kube-arch.com)

said. The room will have the sensibility of a sauna and will look a little woodsy because it's not all tile.

The latest thing in bathroom furnishings is a medicine cabinet with built-in TV. "Now you can watch 'Good Morning America' while you're shaving," said Weaver.

And there is more, suggested the Financial Times' David Tang in his recent "Agony Uncle" column: "For the ultimate [bathroom] luxury, there should be a tray on which one would put beautiful old cut glasses and decanters and a glass ice-bucket, from ... which a decent whisky can be poured."

**Don't let the warm weather trick you into planting too soon**

By Doug Oster  
*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Don't be fooled into starting your garden too early.

After a winter of above-normal temperatures, spring is following suit. Vegetable-garden veterans call this "false spring" and will hold off planting any tender crops, knowing that cold weather, frost and maybe even snow could come at any time. But there are plenty of things you can plant now if you follow some simple guidelines.

The worst thing gardeners can do is turn over the soil while it's too wet. This will destroy the structure, forming giant clumps that will dry and turn into impenetrable bricks better suited for building walls than growing anything.

If your garden is constructed of raised beds filled with organic matter, it might be workable. But most garden soil still needs time to dry out. The old adage says if the soil sticks to the shovel, it's too wet to garden.

This spring, I've seen gardeners who normally hold off planting early crops until April venturing out to the garden now. They add compost to the top of their planting beds and then sow seed or set plants directly in the compost. This way, they don't have to worry about disturbing the moist spring soil.

The key to planting now is choosing varieties that thrive in the coolest temperatures. I've planted seeds of lettuce, arugula, beets, peas, Swiss chard, radishes, carrots, cilantro and mixed greens. For faster germination of peas, I soak them overnight.

The smaller, harder seeds like the greens, lettuce, radishes and carrots will sit patiently waiting for the soil temperatures to be right.

With days in the 60s and 70s, it's looking good for everything to sprout. But that doesn't necessarily mean they will be harvested before seeds started later in the season. It depends on the weather over the next month. Peas started in April are sometimes picked the same time as peas planted in March.

Many leafy greens should be planted several times during the season to ensure constant harvest. When it gets hot, lettuce, spinach and other greens will bolt, meaning they go to seed. They become bitter and inedible. Sowing a crop every few weeks will provide lettuce for salads when the tomatoes are harvested.

Tender crops like tomatoes, peppers and beans, and vine crops like zucchini and cucumbers, should not be planted until May. The plants and sprouted seeds will be killed by frost.

By choosing cool-loving plants, the season can be extended and some things will be harvested before "normal" gardeners get started. -SHNS