



Decorating With Tile Offers Practical Design Possibilities

(NAPS)—Tile has been favored throughout the ages as one of the most versatile, creative, and yet practical of building materials.

One of ceramic tile's charms, says Margaret Sabo Wills, author of *Decorating with Tile* (Creative Homeowner, \$19.95), is that its beauty endures with a minimum of maintenance.

Tile's smooth, nonabsorbent, non-static face gathers less grime than other surfaces under similar use, and the dirt that does gather is easily removed.

By choosing low-care tiles and installation materials, says Wills, you can minimize your housekeeping even further. Here are a few suggestions:

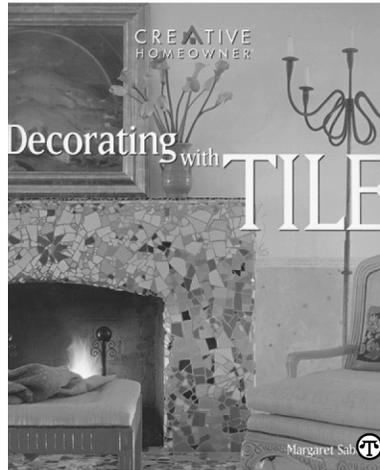
- As with any decorative material, very light or very dark choices demand more housekeeping (and a black and white checkerboard floor, however jazzy it looks, shows everything).

- Think twice about dark glossy tiles in a location subject to soap splashes and makeup and toothpaste drips.

- Lightly textured, patterned, or mottled surfaces in mid-tones or earthy hues are more concealing than flat solid colors.

- High-relief or carved-in intaglio designs can be dirt-trappers. An extremely slip-resistant floor tile, with a gritty glaze or incised patterns, similarly gives grime a better foothold.

- Grout is usually more of a maintenance worry than the tile itself. Installing a large-format



***Decorating with Tile* explores the many design possibilities of tile.**

tile will reduce the number of grout lines. An even better strategy is selecting lower-maintenance products. A basic portland cement-based grout becomes even more water- and stain-resistant and less prone to cracking when formulated with polymer or latex additives.

- For damp environments, consider grout with mildew inhibitors.

- Even with performance-additives, most cement grouts should be sealed and periodically resealed. Such coatings are not required for the dense, smooth finish of epoxy grouts. Regardless of its formulation, a flat, narrow grout joint flush with the tile surface is generally the easiest to keep.

Low-tech preventive maintenance

helps tile keep its no-fuss finish.

- Plan an adequate ventilation system into the overall room design to reduce mildew-forming dampness in bathrooms and greasy smoke residue in kitchens.

- Wipe up spills and splashes as they happen, and sweep floors regularly to remove abrasive grit, particularly near exterior entrances.

- Towel down or squeegee shower-stall walls after use to keep moisture from fostering mildew.

- For routine cleaning of glazed tiles and sealed unglazed tiles—both floors and walls—damp-mop or sponge with hot water and a mild, neutral detergent. Soaps leave a dulling film that can encourage mildew in wet areas.

- Use a mild vinegar solution or special mineral-deposit cleaner to remove hard-water deposits in bath areas.

You can learn more about selecting and decorating with tiles from Wills' book, *Decorating with Tile*. It's part of a line of decorating books from Creative Homeowner, a premier publisher of high-quality home improvement, decorating and gardening titles. For more information, call 1-800-631-7795 or visit www.creativehomeowner.com.

Wills writes about decorating and home design for numerous national publications. Her first book, *Color in the American Home* is also published by Creative Homeowner.