

Brushing Up

Color consulting provides a solid foundation for home design.

Nowadays, it seems like everyone is either hiring an interior designer or watching one on TV. But what if you prefer to do most of the design on your own and just want an expert to get you started on the right track?

An interior designer can help, as can Jacksonville color consultant Pam Sather. She specializes in helping homeowners do something that seems so simple, but is often one of the most challenging aspects of home design: choose paint colors. "Just with a few buckets of paint, you can make a huge difference while spending very little money," she says.

Sather visits the client's home and listens to what they say they want, while examining what is already in the home, such as carpet, tile and counter tops. "Color consulting is choosing color for people knowing the different formulas that make up [the paint] to actually give them what they want, and not what they *think* they want," she explains. "Color is tricky because the shade on a two-inch swatch isn't necessarily what you're going to get on the wall."

For example, Sather says people often choose colors that would actually show up on the wall more intensely than originally intended. "They might say, 'I'm looking for a soft gold,' and they might even have swatches there for me. But I can look at the swatches and say, 'I know what you're going for, but what you're going to get on the wall will be really intense.'" She then shows the client her own swatches and asks them to trust that the new shade is actually more in line

with what they had pictured in their mind.

Besides her background in art (she studied graphic art at the University of Wisconsin) and an intimate acquaintance with Sherwin-Williams paint colors, Sather says she can choose shades "dead on" because she has a natural talent for it. "I had a client who asked why I was so confident," says Sather. "I said, when you know, you know. We've all got our areas [of expertise]."

Sather charges about \$90 per hour for her services. She says most consultations generally only take about an hour. "For relatively little

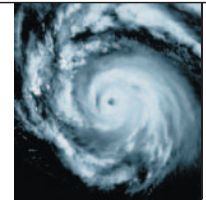
money, I'm giving you the entire idea of your color plan."

The professional paint picker says her goal is to simply create a backdrop for her clients' belongings. "[They say], 'I just want a real person to tell me what to put on my walls that will look good with everything I have.'" By helping the homeowners start with a solid foundation, Sather says they often express great relief at the end of the appointment. "They say, 'I can't wait to paint. I want to get it done tomorrow.'" Of course, they could hire someone to do that, too. *J



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