

Ask a Designer: Using yellow well

Gorgeous shades of yellow have become increasingly popular in home decor, a trend that seems set to continue in the coming year. Yellow is prominent in the Sherwin-Williams color forecast for 2017, while Pantone describes their new "color of the year," called Greenery, as "a fresh and zesty yellow-green." "We haven't seen yellow this popular since the '80s," says New York-based interior designer Young Huh. And in the months to come, she says, "we will see more and more of it as accent colors and as whole room colors."

But while yellow is having a moment, many shades of it can be challenging to use successfully. We've asked Huh and two other design experts - Florida-based interior designer Andrew Howard and Kayla Kitts, managing editor of special projects for HGTV.com - to share tips on using this sunny, cheerful color.

Where to use it

A recent report by Zillow Digs found that homes with white-painted kitchens sell for \$1,400 less than homes with yellow kitchens. If yellow walls seem like too big a leap, Howard suggests using yellow for upholstery and pillows or for kitchen cabinets. In addition to kitchens, Huh says yellow is catching on for entries and hallways "because it makes these utilitarian spaces cheerful." In hallways, it adds a sense of sunshine in a space with little natural light.



Kitts suggests using yellow in "small, more compact spaces that you're looking to make larger," like a powder room. She also says you might want to reject some conventional wisdom that yellow is too bright and busy for a bedroom, especially if it doubles as a home office. A warm yellow can energize the space, while still feeling relaxing. "The trick with yellow is that most people don't even know they like it until they see it in a space," says Howard. "Don't be afraid to go big. I once painted an entire

laundry room yellow and everyone that sees it loves it."

Favorite shades

Yellow is "such a fresh color, and instantly adds life to any space you use it in," says Howard. He suggests starting with a primary yellow and then bringing in other colors for balance: "A room that is yellow by itself will get overwhelming. It needs a blue or green or even a lavender to cool it down a bit."

Kitts and Huh are both fans of more citrusy yellows, and even chartreuse. "I especially like Pantone's primrose yellow because, like the color of the year, Greenery, there is an acid element which makes the color more exciting and edgy," says Huh. "It's a color we see in nature, but in an electric way. This is not your grandma's yellow. It's fashion forward and forward thinking."

These colors look great paired with gray or blue shades. "Pale yellow is also a wonderful ground color for extravagant colorful prints," says Huh. Even in its softer incarnations, "it evokes hope, sunshine and brightness."

Kitts agrees: "Buttery shades are really great for adding a warm glow and making a space feel cozy." In rooms that get a lot of natural sunlight, she says, even more neutral yellows like cornsilk will offer that optimistic energy that characterizes yellow.

Challenges

No shade of yellow is impossible to use, but do choose with care. Kitts says that if you'll be painting walls yellow, test out a shade and view it throughout the day to see how it changes in different types of natural light and with different lamps. You might have to live with a sample of a bright, lemon yellow for a few weeks to make sure it's something you want long-term. Yet going with paler yellows isn't always a safer bet.

"Yellow can be tricky, because if it is too pale and the room it is in is relatively dark or gets cool, north-facing light, the color will look dingy rather than cheerful or calming," says Huh. "In England, where the weather can be drab, period rooms are painted bright yellows. Nancy Lancaster's famous yellow drawing room is perhaps the greatest and most popular example of a striking yellow room." Contrast can also help: "Yellow needs to be paired with a cooler color to have it work effectively," says Howard. "It cannot be the only color in a room."

So take time to choose shades that delight you. "The yellows that are trending now are the ones that are not pure yellows, but tertiary colors," says Huh. "These are not classic yellows that you may have seen in the past. They're either refreshing or deep moody yellow, and will inspire more emotion than a pure yellow. Because of this, we'll see these yellows in smaller moments, accents such as contrast pillows or on one upholstered chair in a room." Despite its challenges, yellow is an easy color to love, says Howard. "In the last couple of years we remembered how much we always loved it," he says. "I am really excited to see it popping up more and more, and hope that it's not a trend but a permanent fixture in how we decorate." — AP

Dramatic touches of yellow bring warmth and energy to contrast with the crisp whites and soft, natural wood tones in this relaxing sunroom, designed by New York-based interior designer Young Huh. — AP photos

