



Animal House

Roll out the welcome mat, chair or cage for four-legged family members with style, panache and color

By DANIELLE CADET | CTW FEATURES

Cognizant of how important their pets are, many homeowners make special accommodations at home for their four-legged friends. "Pets lower our blood pressure, they help us live longer and they're non-judgmental listeners. The least you can do is give them a comfortable place to sleep," says Julia Szabo, a New York City-based pet reporter for the New York Post and author of "Pretty Pet-Friendly: Easy Ways to Keep Spot's Digs Stylish and Spotless" (Howell Book House, 2009). These days, creating an animal-friendly environment at home is easier than ever.

As an owner of five dogs and six cats, Szabo is more than familiar with sharing her space. She says pet proofing a home not only guards it against Sparky's potential spills, but also from any messes guests might make. "When you make an environment pet friendly your also making it guest or child friendly. It facilitates an overall relaxed atmosphere anyone can enter," she says. But building that atmosphere requires furniture and flooring that are easy to keep clean. She recommends wood or tile floors and furniture made of fabrics such as crypton, a polyester microfiber that is stain, water and bacteria resistant.

Other dog experts agree that choosing the right fabric is crucial, particularly for very furry pets. "You want more slippery fabrics that the hair does not attach to and that are durable enough to be wiped down, like faux leather," says Colleen Paige, founder of Los Angeles-based Pet Home Design and publisher of Pet Home digital magazine. Paige also suggests purchasing colors that match the pet's

fur to help conceal the unavoidable shedding on furniture.

Giving a pet his or her own space is just as imperative and helps avoid behavioral problems, Paige says. "Probably the biggest reason for dog behavior problems is they don't feel like they have adequate space. Dogs really like to den, so it's very important to give a dog his own space," she says. To help solve this issue, she designs customized dog cabanas that provide a stylish place for pups to rest.

Some pet owners however, don't want their home to revolve around their pets. "I have clients

that don't necessarily want to have a house that looks like a toddler lives there or are not willing to sacrifice the style of their environment," Paige says. For customers who don't want an entire house of pet-friendly furniture, she recommends designating a specific chair that belongs to a pet and teaching them that it is the only piece of furniture they are allowed to lounge on. And for those who are unwilling to forego fragile valuables, she suggests earthquake putty, a removable substance that holds delicate items securely in place, safe-guarding them from



Image courtesy of Julia Szabo



Image courtesy of Colleen Paige

wagging tails and playful paws.

Both experts also agree on keeping a pet in mind when cleaning. Use non-toxic cleaning products from toilet scrubbers to laundry detergents, Szabo says. She suggests PawSafe Household Cleaners, a company that provides an entire line of natural cleaning products specifically formulated to be safe for pets. As for Paige, she is a fan of using items easily found around the house such as baking soda, water, vinegar and lemon halves to scrub down tables and countertops.

Pet proofing may take a little more time and energy, but it's worth the pay off. "It's not easy, but from taking care of my pets, I've learned to treat myself better. For everything they give me, I don't mind working for them," Szabo says. Taking a few extra hours to make room for furry friends can make any house a home for inhabitants with two legs and more.

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The Light Fantastic

Take boring bathroom lighting to the next level with a brilliant, box-shaped statement fixture

By DAWN KLINGENSMITH | CTW FEATURES

Lighting is always an important design element, particularly in the case of bathrooms. Second to kitchens, restrooms are the most frequently visited area of the house.

"They can easily set the mood and atmosphere of the home," says Bob Kaseta, lighting designer at Brockton, Mass.-based Illuminated Interiors. When it comes to shedding a little light in contemporary bathrooms, Kaseta says anything goes. "Today, people are decorating bathrooms in themes and styles. There's a trend toward trying to recreate stylish environments like powder rooms with crystal chandeliers. People are just expressing individual style and creating beautiful spaces," he says.

There's nothing little about lights in the bathroom. Fixtures can create an elegant ambiance no matter how small or large the space is.

"When you walk into a dark room and flip on the switch, the light fixture sets the tone for the room. By simply replacing an outdated fixture, you can give your bathroom a whole new look," Kaseta says. So choose a fixture that not only creates a luxurious atmosphere but will also shine through as the centerpiece of the entire space. With all the available lighting possibilities, it's hard to keep track of what's new - here are some bright ideas that can bring light and stylish flair to any bathroom.

Hotel Chic

"Bathroom light fixtures are trending toward bright-light and chunky instead of small, delicate and ornate," says Judy Fertel, of New York City-based Remains Lighting. "Across the top of the vanity we're seeing more modern, boxy things like you find in high-end hotels. The look is clean, industrial and uber-modern."

Can it!

Recessed downlights, or cans, are good for ambient, flood and spot lighting, but an electrician needs to set the housings before installing drywall so adding them is a major project. When adding these fixtures and others, Kaseta says it's best to work with a professional. "We can show and explain the wide variety of prices and quality levels, and how to properly position and apply various styles," he says.

Vanity Fair

A light fixture above the vanity along with wall-mounted fixtures on both sides of the mirror offers cross illumination for shadow-free lighting. Where side fixtures don't already exist, a wrap-around fixture can be installed without additional wiring.

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