

# Bye bye magnolia!

*Magnolia is said to be the preferred colour to neutralise the paint palette and provide universal appeal to potential home buyers or those looking to rent. Interior designer **Emma Rees** does not challenge this convention, but explores ways to satisfy the principle while still achieving a 'designer' look.*

**M**agnolia is essentially a shade of cream, bearing little relation to the beautiful crisp colours of white, pink and purple of the flowers from the actual magnolia tree.

I do not intend to challenge the conventions of favoring neutral paints for house selling or renting but wish instead to explore the choice of paint colours, textures and wallpapers that have developed hugely in recent years. Used wisely, a look can still be achieved that suits personal design tastes whilst also satisfying potential buyers.

A well-designed paint scheme should provide a sophisticated look that adds value to properties, not just admiration. The following are my paint and wallpaper design tips:

- There is a huge selection of neutral shades now available - other than magnolia - that will bring serenity and a contemporary crispness to newly painted walls. White now comes in many different tones. I particularly like All White, Pointing and James White (all Farrow & Ball). Keeping with the neutral theme, but being slightly more adventurous, I would also recommend Joa's White (Farrow & Ball) and Thames Mud (Paint & Paper Library).
- Light should be a major consideration in colour selection. It is imperative that you buy a sample pot and paint it on a piece of MDF or wood. You can then position it against the walls to be painted at different times of the day. As the light in the room changes it will alter the shade of colour. I have Skimming Stone (Farrow & Ball) in my kitchen, which is a grey tone but I have also used it in my study, which has little light, as it is north facing and it has taken on a slightly creamier hue.
- Whether we realise it or not, we instinctively have a preference for particular colours. It is important to consider what these are, so that your interior reflects your

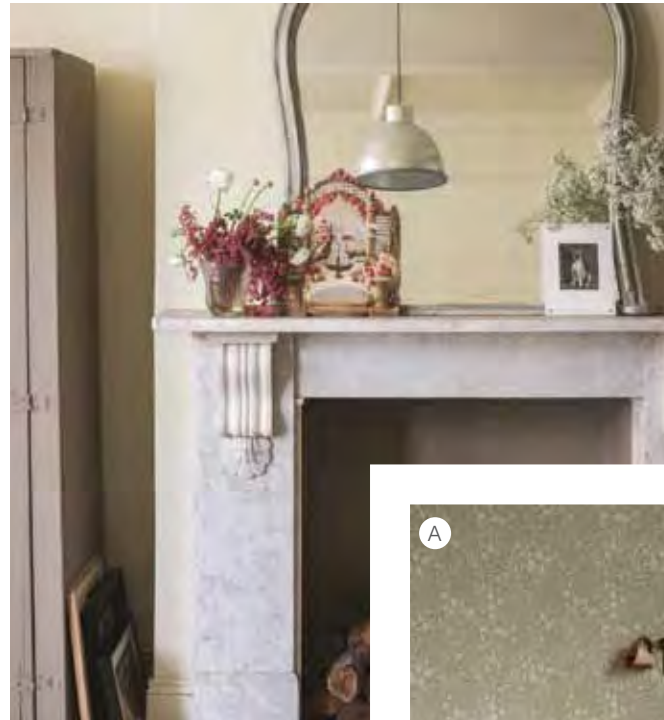
persona; but perhaps more importantly, so you enjoy the aesthetic look and feel of the colours you will be living with everyday. That being said, however, it is important to try and harmonise colours to avoid them 'vying for attention'.

- Selecting the same colour for woodwork and the ceilings throughout the house will also help by creating flow through the home. The coolness of Light Blue, for instance, can be warmed by Joa's White, and the striking depth of Card Room Green can be tempered with the soothing tone of Pointing. (all Farrow & Ball)
- There is a misconception that painting a small dark room in light colours will make it look lighter. I would advise to the contrary - be brave and paint the downstairs toilet in a strong colour, Plum Brandy (Paint and Paper Library), for instance, and invest in dramatic lighting with high wattage so you can enjoy the depth of colour and warmth it can provide.

## Wallpaper

Being brave can equally be applied to the use of wallpaper. Wallpaper has made a huge revival, but choosing the right one can be overwhelming. Below are my tips:

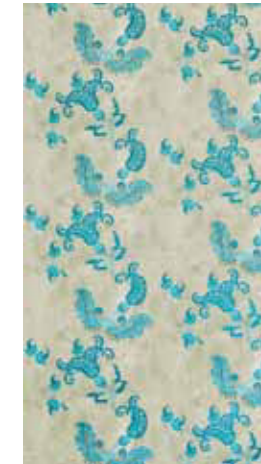
- Again choice is personal but for those planning to sell their homes or renting I would suggest a 'conservative' option. Ocelot BP (above right picture A), is a good example of a wallpaper that would be more universally acceptable and suitable in bedrooms or sitting rooms.
- For those staying put, why not indulge in some of the most exquisite wallpapers currently available. Barnaby Gates has a fantastic, if not, wacky, selection. Whilst Farrow & Ball has more than 1,000 colourways, all designed to work in combination with their paint colours. Tessella BP (right) is a



**(Above) Paint by Farrow & Ball, Wall – James White Estate Emulsion, Cupboard – Manor House Gray Estate Eggshell. (Right) Ocelot BP 3702 is priced at £85 per 10 metre roll by Farrow & Ball**



**Tessella BP 3604 is priced at £78 per 10 metre roll. By Farrow & Ball**



**(Above) Wallpaper designs by Barnaby Gates**

more dramatic wallpaper and I would suggest this is used for themed walls rather than being universally applied.

- My strongest tip is to use wallpaper in selective areas only – a universal application can be both overpowering and expensive!
- Remember too that wallpaper is the easiest way to add pattern, texture and character to a room – but don't be too keen to cover the paper up with pictures, which could detract or complicate the look.

And finally, whatever you choose – wallpaper or paint - it is essential that the work is undertaken in a professional manner. I have heard it said that 80 per cent of your effort should be put in the preparation, sanding, filling and . . . more sanding! So happy decorating! ■



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