

# A FOUR-WAY FOCUS

Although the bathroom occupies a small area, it is a complex space. To analyze its potential for improvements, consider the various components as they fit within the classical elements of water, fire, earth and wind.



Besides adding a pop of color, the In2ition shower combines a handheld spray and a fixed shower head.

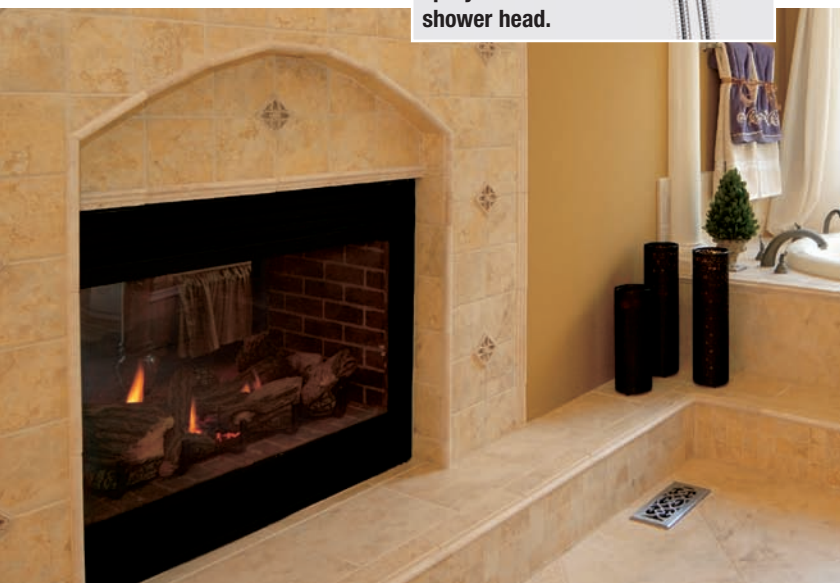
## WATER

The supply and drain lines — and anything related to water — fit in this group. After basic maintenance, here are some enhancements to consider:

**For less than \$50:** Add aerators to the sink faucet. Switch to a handheld shower head.

**\$50 to \$500:** Replace the faucet and upgrade to a high-efficiency toilet (see Web video). For a sense of luxury — and efficient use of water and energy — install a hot-water recirculation system. It keeps a ready flow of hot water on tap by sending the cooled water back to the hot water tank instead of down the drain.

**More than \$500:** Add a shower tower, jetted tub, whirlpool bath or soaking tub.



A fireplace may not be in your future, but try framing a plain plate-glass mirror to add a feeling of richness and warmth in your bathroom (see SOURCES ONLINE).

## FIRE

In any room, this relates to sources of light and heat as well as the sense of warmth that comes from luxurious touches and good design.

**For less than \$50:** Install dimmer switches on light fixtures. Change the window treatment to one that emits more light and/or prevents heat loss.

**\$50 to \$500:** Update the light fixtures. Install a Solatube skylight. Add a decorative frame to a plain mirror. Install a towel warmer.

**More than \$500:** For ultimate comfort, upgrade to an in-floor heating system if you plan to replace the floor. An acrylic-block wall will brighten the shower area. For a grand redo, consider adding a fireplace.

Bathroom furniture adds a sense of comfort, a trend seen in many manufacturers' offerings such as this suite from Delta. As a creative alternative, you can be green (and thrifty) by converting an old dresser into a vanity.

## EARTH

From ceiling to floor (and everything between), elements made of metal, wood and earth offer multiple options for creating a spa atmosphere.

**For less than \$50:** Replace the toilet seat. Paint the vanity and add new handles/knobs. Replace discolored or cracked grout. Paint the walls (see "Spartan Spa," p. 28). Add flair to the ceiling by painting it with a metallic finish or installing crown molding or a ceiling medallion. Switch to a curved shower rod.

**\$50 to \$500:** Replace the sink or vanity (see "Wall-mounted Vanity," p. 13). Repurpose a piece of furniture for a "new" vanity (photo above). Add decorative tile to the walls or tile the floor.

**More than \$500:** Install a new tub surround or even a new tub.

## WIND

Pure air is essential to the spa experience. It creates a healthier, more pleasant environment.

**For less than \$50:** Clean with nontoxic agents; use zero-VOC paints and finishes. Add a live plant. (Most thrive in humid environments, and many act as air purifiers.) Washable and clear surfaces keep dust and mold at bay, so limit the use of fabric and wallpaper.

**\$50 to \$500:** Install a bathroom fan, or upgrade to a quieter, more efficient system.

**More than \$500:** Install a whole-house ventilation system.

Bathroom ventilation is healthy — and pretty — with this fan/light combination from NuTone (see SOURCES ONLINE).

