



Nine Benefits of Using Reclaimed Wood in Your Bathroom Design

By Naomi Neilson Howard

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Around the world, old barns, factories, warehouses, fences, and railroad ties are getting a luxe second life in the form of a reclaimed wood mirror here, a barnwood vanity there, and plenty of rescued wood accent walls along the way. While this bathroom design trend may have begun for environmental reasons, its warm good looks ensure its popularity will continue to climb.

Some things to love about reclaimed wood:

It has character. No two pieces of reclaimed wood are alike. Due to its history and age, reclaimed wood is often deeply textured and distinguished by visible wear marks and nail holes.

It has a story to tell. Along the same lines as the first point, much of the reclaimed wood being used today comes with a story that homeowners and designers love to tell and retell—whether it's of the dilapidated barn upstate where the beautifully weathered barnwood was harvested or of a renovation project during which a home's original wood was salvaged and then upcycled. The tacit knowledge of a former "life" adds depth of character to bathroom pieces made from this wood.

Not just reclaimed—it can be repurposed, too. Some of the most enchanting reclaimed wood pieces are those that don't stray too far from their original purpose. Wine barrel vanities are a most-talked-about foray into salvaged wood – just type that phrase into Google. Wine barrel vanities are typically made from an oak wine barrel that has outlived its original five-year lifespan.

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Photos courtesy Native Trails by photographer Sean Sullivan



Naomi Neilson Howard is the founder and CEO of Native Trails. Since 1996, she has combined age-old traditions with contemporary design and sustainable materials. Today, Native Trails' products are sold in more than 1,300 showrooms throughout the United States, Canada and beyond. They have received numerous awards for innovation and design, and have been featured on DIY, HGTV, and W Network television shows. For more information, visit www.nativetrails.net call (800) 786-0862.



Mother Earth will thank you. Reusing timber that would otherwise be discarded not only keeps it from going to landfill but preserves forests by preventing the same quantity of virgin timber from being harvested. Moreover, processing reclaimed wood has a lower impact on the environment compared to the felling, transporting, and processing of virgin timber.

It is often rare or exotic – if it's not from your local community. Much reclaimed wood is sourced locally, providing benefits on a local level, but there are also advantages to rescuing wood. Reclaimed wood can provide a source for a rare, exotic, or commercially unavailable wood species. For instance, with the depletion of old-growth trees, the size of available forest wood is generally smaller than what might be available from salvaged sources, since the high demand for virgin timber means trees seldom are allowed to mature to their full size.

It's a foolproof way to evoke farmhouse style. From farmhouse sinks to barnwood décor, easy, unfussy farmhouse style is all the rage with both city and country dwellers who want their homes to feel comfortable and authentic. One of the top ways to achieve this style is to incorporate old barnwood into the bathroom in the form of a vanity.

It offers a rich, authentic finish. In the case of products made from salvaged wine-making materials, even the finishes are original, as the wood oaking staves gain their unique rich finish as a result of soaking in red or white wine for many months. The oak infuses tannins and aroma into the wine while absorbing the color of the grapes, and the natural finish of this rescued wood is later enhanced by hand waxing to bring out the color and protect the wood.

Reclaimed wood offers texture, contrast and warmth. In a place where vast amounts of tile can quickly make a space go cold and sterile, designers are often looking for something to "warm up" master bathrooms and powder rooms. Reclaimed wood fits the bill.

Reclaimed wood is naturally more durable. This is one of the greatest benefits about reclaimed wood. Because it has often already been exposed to the elements, it's not as susceptible to the same shrinkage and movement that newer wood is. The wood has fully dried out, so it will be less prone to warping. And because it is already "aged," there shouldn't be any surprises about how durable it will be in the years to come – making it perfect for the bathroom.