

A shade better: Bye bye beige! Gray is the hot neutral of the moment



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It's a time-honored real estate maxim: The best way to excite buyers is with the low-key, neutral approach.

“One red wall could stop [buyers] from looking any further if that isn't their thing,” notes Nicole Sassaman, author of “100 Sassy Tips: Renovations” (Design Life, 2013).

Home sellers who don't keep up with interior design trends probably think that painting walls a tan or beige is the way to go neutral and not offend anyone's color sensibilities

But, “Many people may not be aware that there are great neutrals in certain shades of green, blue, gray, brown, and yellow,” notes Maureen Bray, president of the Real Estate Staging Association.

Right now, gray is the fashionable neutral, agree experts.

“It has become the neutral of choice,” says Leslie Harrington, executive director of The Color Association of the United States.

Michelle Minch of Moving Mountains Design Home Staging in Los Angeles reports that in the newly constructed homes she works on, she sees “a lot of gray tones, from warm to cool grays.”

In a poll for its 2015 Trend Report, the National Kitchen & Bath Association found that 77 percent of its designer members used gray in their work during the last year, and they expect the trend to build this year.

“Gray is popular nearly everywhere,” says Maria Stapperfenne, 2015 NKBA president. “We see it in countertops, floors cabinetry, furnishings, painted walls ...you name it. It is truly the new, hip neutral.”

But it can be decidedly unhip to simply grab a can of gray paint off the shelf.

“It's important to use the right shade and tone of gray,” says Bray, adding that “the right shade or tone of gray depends on the amount of natural light in the room as well as the [colors] of the fixed elements present.”