

To those who view wallpaper as too risky or old-fashioned, designer Mark Phelps says, "Think again." Classically beautiful prints can turn a room into anything but a ...

Wallflower

As a boy, interior designer Mark Phelps loved the wallpaper in his grandmother's breakfast room. "It had a foil background with green-and-brown palm trees," he recalls. "Through the years, it was always beautiful." Today, Phelps has wallpaper in almost every room of his Charlotte home and proposes it often to his clients.

"Wallpaper is more expensive and takes more thought than paint, but it weathers change well and is more versatile than people think," Phelps says. He finds that when you pick a tried-and-true pattern from a quality manufacturer, it can be the mainstay of a room even if the furniture and accessories change through time.

A perfect example is the floral document print paper in the Charlotte dining room of one of Phelps' clients, shown on the next page. The homeowner had fond memories of the paper from her mother's dining room, so Phelps tracked it down from the British firm of Colefax & Fowler and let it inspire the rest of the room.

The medium-size floral print repeats hundreds of times around the large room, a busy look Phelps embellished with wall-to-wall leopard-print carpet and smocked draperies. "I think you can afford to be more dramatic in rooms that you spend less time in," he says. "What would feel overwhelming on a daily basis feels like a treat in smaller doses."

Another reason Phelps uses wallpaper is its ability to create a distraction to the size or shape of a room. "It's kind of like cheating," he confides, referring to how a paper with a vertical stripe can make a low ceiling seem higher. At home, Phelps' dining room is bound by interior walls, so he created a sense of the outdoors by papering the ceiling in a trellis pattern, a tactic that brightens the windowless space. "I love putting wallpaper on the ceiling," he says. "It's a great look in any room, no matter the size."

Beautiful wallpaper makes a perfect starting point in any room, Phelps says. "Take an undecorated room and paper it, and the room feels decorated."

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ABOVE: Luxurious silk taffeta draperies are accented with trim in all the colors of the wallpaper. BELOW: The masterful pattern play continues on the antique French settee, where a vintage needlepoint pillow rests atop silk fabric in checks and stripes. OPPOSITE: Instead of downplaying the wallpaper's busy pattern, designer Mark Phelps continued the active scheme with leopard-print carpeting and intricately smocked draperies.



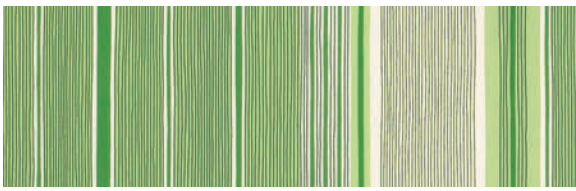


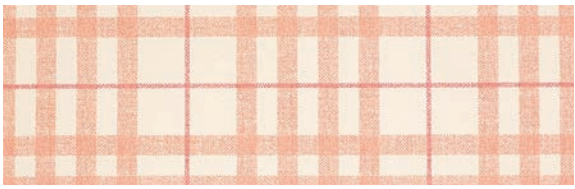






great and small





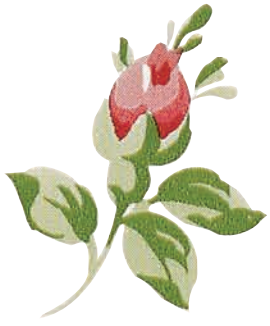






The wallpaper's repeating vertical flowers make hanging artwork and sconces as easy as counting the rows.



SCALE & BALANCE

When it comes to choosing the print size on wallpaper, no rules need apply. However, the scale of a pattern will make a difference in how a room looks. Here are some things to consider:

- Have fun with a small or dark room by using big, bold prints, keeping in mind that bigger pattern repeats require more paper, which raises the cost.
- Use a large-scale pattern on expanses of unbroken wall.
- Balance the wallpaper print with other patterns in the room, combining large and small scales.
- Choose one pattern that's meant to be dominant.
- Make a room intimate with paper above a chair rail.
- Paper a ceiling to warm a room without the pattern overwhelming.
- Create a bold statement in a small room with a large print.
- Buy the best quality wallpaper you can afford, even if you use it sparingly, and buy an extra roll to use for any potential damage down the road.
- Beware of using a small pattern in a large room; it can be too subtle or too busy.

