



Interior Design in Lamorinda—What Color to Choose?

By Andrea A. Firth



Mari Tischenko and Jana Rains

Photo: Andrea Firth

Color consultants Mari Tischenko and Jana Rains talk about paint colors the way some women reminisce over childhood friends. With names like Timothy Straw, Saybrook Sage, Jalapeno Pepper, and Dill Pickle among their favorites, these colors sound like they could be old friends. Mari and Jana came to work together as colorists establishing a business based in Orinda about five years ago after their sons, who are also friends, graduated from Miramonte High School.

“Color should make everything in the room look great,” explains Jana. “The function of color is to wrap its arms around the rest of the

things that are happening in the room and support those things rather than be the focal point itself.” Although they describe seeing a variety of approaches to color in the homes they work in through out Lamorinda, Mari notes, “Many people are using color now. We have moved away from the all beige or white house of the previous decade.” But Jana is quick to add (as these partners often finish one another’s thoughts), “White is a color that should be used deliberately. It should be treated as a color not a default.”

Mari and Jana avoid trends when it comes to color. “Every year there is a new color trend, and you will see

this new color grouping in the goods of many of the large home furnishings retailers,” explains Mari. “We try to focus on what’s really right for the client’s home. Color trends come and go from year to year, but you often keep your furniture and your home for twenty years or more.”

Mari and Jana regularly deal with the unique aspects of Lamorinda homes when recommending color choices. “We approach each house as a composition. We consider the connection between the inside and the outside as well as how the house flows,” states Mari. Choosing color for homes in Lamorinda requires balancing all the natural beauty and color

in the foliage and landscape that surrounds the home and is reflected inward she explains. She also notes that the open floor plan found in many area homes necessitates assigning color in a more architectural manner rather than a decorative manner. “It’s a big factor. You can weaken or confuse spaces with the improper placement no matter how beautiful the color may be.”

After several attempts to pin these color gurus down to what colors work best in Lamorinda homes, Jana explains. “There is a trend to color that is a little more organic. The colors are often all part of the same family, so it all flows. And it’s not just earth tones like browns and greens. You can have organic yellows and organic blues. Every color can be an earth tone.”

So what is that perfect color for you? “Everyone has an inner palette that they respond to,” explains Jana. “The function of your house is to serve as a nest that makes you feel warm, comfortable, and secure. If you have a color around you that supports you then it works for you.” Mari Tischenko and Jana Rains can be reached for color consulting at 253-9744.