



balancing act

Google “feng shui” and be prepared to be swamped with an array of definitions, practitioners and schools.

Practiced for more than 4500 years by the Chinese, the feng shui system harnesses the energies of wind and water, the universal life forces, to create an environment full of good energy. Originally used to find the most favourable burial sites for ancient emperors, today it is used to create harmonious environments to enhance all areas of life.

Old masters may have studied for 30 or more years to master their craft, adhering to one of the key schools: the Form School (working with the features of a site, such as mountains or water), the Compass Method (using a geomancer’s multi-ring compass or Luo Pan), or a theoretical combination of I Ching, Confucianism and Taoism. Today, Western feng shui practitioners use elements of those schools in a blend called Intuitive. Those drawn to feng shui have often instinctively followed the essential Oriental principals of good balance, harmony and energy in creating interior colour schemes, placing furniture and choosing accessories.

Interior designer, now feng shui practitioner and teacher, Betty Bayley puts it simply.

“Instead of focussing purely on the physical aspects of an area, feng shui concentrates on the feeling we create in a room. The result is an amazing space, where people comment on the wonderful energy it gives them”.

Feng shui’s emphasis on simplicity, lack of clutter and seasonal appropriateness is easy to adapt. Clean, open surfaces – including inside cupboards and under beds – keep the energy flowing freely in homes. So, a good de-clutter and some fresh accessories – autumn flowers and fruits, for example – may be the best feng shui re-decoration you can create.

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However, she points out that many of us, in the pursuit of fashion or saleability, or trying to impress, also lose touch with what we know instinctively to be the good feeling of a colour in our homes. Small children still have that strong sense, and will become agitated or not go into a room that jars that natural sense.

In its simplest form, feng shui balances the five key elements of fire, earth, metal, water and wood, mimicking nature in their use and balance. Certain colours and shapes also represent these elements.

For more on Feng Shui visit www.resene.co.nz/homeown/use_colr/feng_shui.htm.



fire

Since primitive times, humans have been drawn to the warmth, security and power of fire. As well as in the fireplace, fire is represented by candles, living beings and pointy peak shapes. **Colours:** reds and purples (from lavender to burgundy). Try Resene Belladonna, Candy Floss, Arthouse, Sensual Red, Lip Service, Havoc, Chaos, Dynamite and Giggle.

earth

In a home, this is represented by materials from the earth, such as pottery, tile, crystals, soil in a pot plant, and by square, flat shapes. **Colours:** browns, terracottas and yellows. Try Resene Bittersweet, Desperado, Jandal, Authentic, Chocolate Brownie, Fudge, Moroccan Spice, Banana Split and Mustang.

metal

In western homes, elements such as taps, handles, or furniture legs represent metals, as do golds and silvers, and round or domed shapes. **Colours:** whites, greys and beiges. Try Resene Bowman, Milk White, Fawn, Copyrite, Caraway, Latte, Dutch White, Flotsam and Soapstone.

water

As well as water in vases or fish bowls, water is represented by asymmetrical, wavy or flowing shapes, glass and mirrors. Unlike here, water in ancient China was more likely to be dark, slow-moving rivers, so water elements are darker or richer than you may expect. **Colours:** navy blues, blacks and royal blues. Try Resene Storm, Black, Hip Hop, Dark Knight, Cobalt, True Blue, Topsy Turvy, Indian Ink and Aviator.

wood

As well as items made from wood, this element is represented by tall, thin forms – as in a tree trunk – and all those materials made from wood or plants, such as linen, rattan, cotton, bamboo and other natural fibres. **Colours:** greens or paler blues. Try Resene Eskimo, Soft Mint, English Sage, Green Fields, Marsh Green, Cut Glass, Ashanti, Soft Apple and Escape.



Working with colour in feng shui has reinforced to Betty the power of particular shades in altering mood and feeling. Here are some common responses to colours:

Red: is a yang, high-energy colour, so not to be overused. It is too stimulating for children's bedrooms (where they go to calm and slow down) but terrific for a dining room to stimulate conversation, appetite and good times.

Yellow: has power and intelligence, but too much can be irritating, especially for children (yellowed lime greens, for example).

Green: is for hope and new energy, as well as being good for digestion, so great for a kitchen or dining room.

Blue: is cool, calming and ideal for a bedroom or healing space.

Purple: is a highly spiritual colour, but can be too stimulating for some people (being a combination of strong blue and strong red). However, calming pale lilacs and lavenders have the same effect as soft blues or soft pinks.

Pink: yes, love, happiness and joy. It doesn't have to be hot, hussy pink – find a soft shade that pleases you.

Whites: to Westerners are cleansing and pure. Use a white keyed to the colour or elements you favour – Resene Albescent White with earthy shades; Oyster with olives and browns; Ivory with the peaches, camels or yellow greens; Resene Bianca with soft whites or clear pastels; and pure Resene Black White with black and clear colours.

Black: because it absorbs light (and chi energy), handle black with care, using it in reflective glossy lacquer, and opening windows and curtains to let in energy.

Betty finds that the environment we inhabit heavily influences our attraction to certain colours. People living close to the earth are attracted to the muted soil colours. People living in upper floor apartments or with dominant water views favour watery and sky blues to give them a sense of connection with what they see outside.

Betty happily uses patterns in her feng shui colour schemes, but warns that mixing patterns and shapes requires some skill to ensure the proportion and repetition of colours, textures and shapes works. Mimic nature, where the darkest colours are on the ground (the forest floor), the mid colours around us at eye level (the walls) and the lightest colours in the sky (the ceiling), she advises. Use the strongest, brightest hits of colour in small doses that change out with the seasons – as you see with seasonal flowers, leaves or blossoms. Listen to your intuitive reaction when you are in coloured spaces, and don't be fooled into thinking whites, beiges and neutrals are the only sophisticated or fashionable choices. **H**