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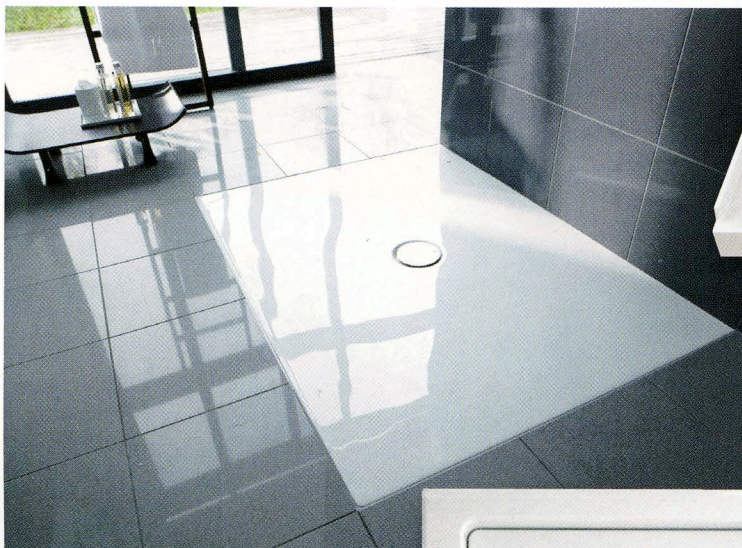
BIDETS / SHOWER PANS

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SHOWER POWER

Mortar beds are still popular, but there are other ways to create a waterproof shower pan

BY NIGEL F. MAYNARD

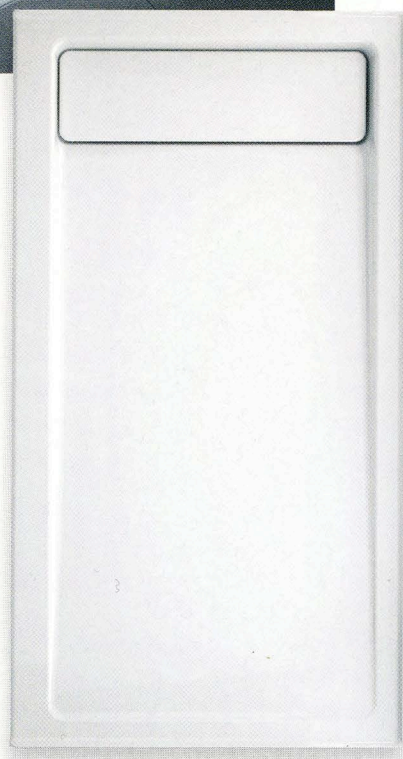


DURAVIT

The DuraPlan shower tray offers slip-resistant acrylic construction and a flush-mounted, barrier-free design that allows exact alignment with tiled surfaces. It's available in 14 models and in sizes from 32 by 32 to 63 by 36 inches. duravit.us / CIRCLE 852

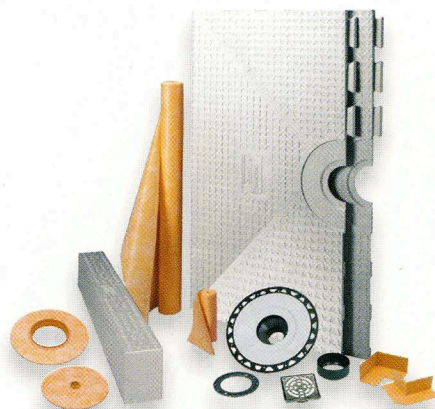
KOHLER

The 60-by-32-inch Bellwether shower base is made from enameled cast iron, making it durable and easy to maintain, the manufacturer says. A removable drain cover gives the unit a sleek, finished look, and a Safeguard slip-resistant finish provides added safety. us.kohler.com / CIRCLE 854



DXV

Made from an antibacterial solid surface, the Modulus shower base is a nonporous material that is also impact-resistant. It has a three-sided tiling/water-retention flange and a trench drain with a matching removable cover. dxv.com / CIRCLE 853



SCHLUTER-SYSTEMS

The Schluter-Kerdi-Shower-Kit offers a one-stop solution for creating a waterproof shower system that's ready for tile. Available in a variety of sizes, it includes a shower tray, curb, waterproofing membrane and strips, formed corners, pipe seal, and mixing valve seal. schluter.com / CIRCLE 855



WETSTYLE

Made from Wetmar, the company's natural stone composite material, the DC collection features a low threshold and a slip-resistant, antimicrobial surface. It's available in lengths from 36 inches to 60 inches, and comes in high-gloss or matte finishes.

wetstyle.ca / CIRCLE 856



BLU BATHWORKS

Available in lengths measuring 98½ inches long, the manufacturer's shower base features a 1¼-inch threshold. It's made from an eco-friendly composite material called Blu-Stone that is seamless and durable, the company says. It can be cut to fit on-site.

blubathworks.com / CIRCLE 857

Once upon a time, the primary method for creating a shower pan was with a mortar bed and a waterproofing membrane. This tried-and-true practice is one of the best ways to create a stable substrate for tile.

"All of the showers I've designed have had a custom floor with tile," says designer April Force Pardoe, AKBD, principal of April Force Pardoe Interiors. "We've used mud beds on all of them to allow us to achieve a custom size. We use a ¼-inch membrane underneath and an epoxy grout because it's not permeable."

But a mortar bed can be time-consuming to install and requires someone with considerable skill. It includes framing the shower perimeter, installing a waterproofing membrane (sometimes a copper pan), and pitching the floor to the drain. A mortar bed also requires at least 24 hours before it's ready for tiling.

Today, mortar beds are largely unnecessary. Preformed shower pans are available in many sizes, allowing contractors to tile on the same day or skip it all together.

Kohler, for example, offers shower receptors in acrylic and cast iron that are easy to install for builders and remodelers and are slip-resistant and safe for home buyers.

In addition to cast acrylic, MTI Baths offers shower pans in engineered solid stone. "In both cases, the shower base is of one-piece construction," says Michael Kornowa, director of marketing for MTI. "They come with tile flanges for easy installation and leak-proof operation. Both materials are nonporous, so cleaning is easy. Since there is no grout involved, installation is faster."

Even in cases where a preformed shower receptor is not an option—large custom showers—manufacturers offer a solution.

For some designers, Schluter-Systems changed the way tiled showers are created. The brand's Kerdi-Shower-Kit is an all-inclusive package containing the components required to create a waterproof shower enclosure, including the shower tray, curb, waterproofing membrane, waterproofing strips, formed corners, and mixing valve seal.

"Market demand is changing the way we approach the renovation and construction of bathrooms," Schluter says in a release, adding that "moisture management is the cornerstone of durability in the bathroom, so we are providing waterproof building components that make this a possibility."

Mark Wolinsky, president of Wetstyle, says shower trays account for less than 5 percent of the company's sales. "However, we see this category growing over the next few years, as the need for ADA bathrooms increases alongside an aging Baby Boomer population."

Wolinsky says Wetstyle's most popular shower trays are the 60-by-30-inch and 60-by-32-inch models, as well as a new 60-by-36-inch tray with a linear drain. "They're sizes that customers can apply in a typical 5-by-8 bathroom," he explains. "They also correspond to standard bathtub sizes."

The explosive growth of these products is due to increasing demand for showers, and with it, the products to build them.

"For the vast majority of the American population, showers are used for daily hygiene," Kornowa notes. "They are quick."

And with all of the options on the market, it will be much easier and cheaper to create the stylish showers that consumers are predicted to demand well into the future. ■