

# Essential Extras

Design options mean toilets are no longer just a necessity

by Glenda Rogers

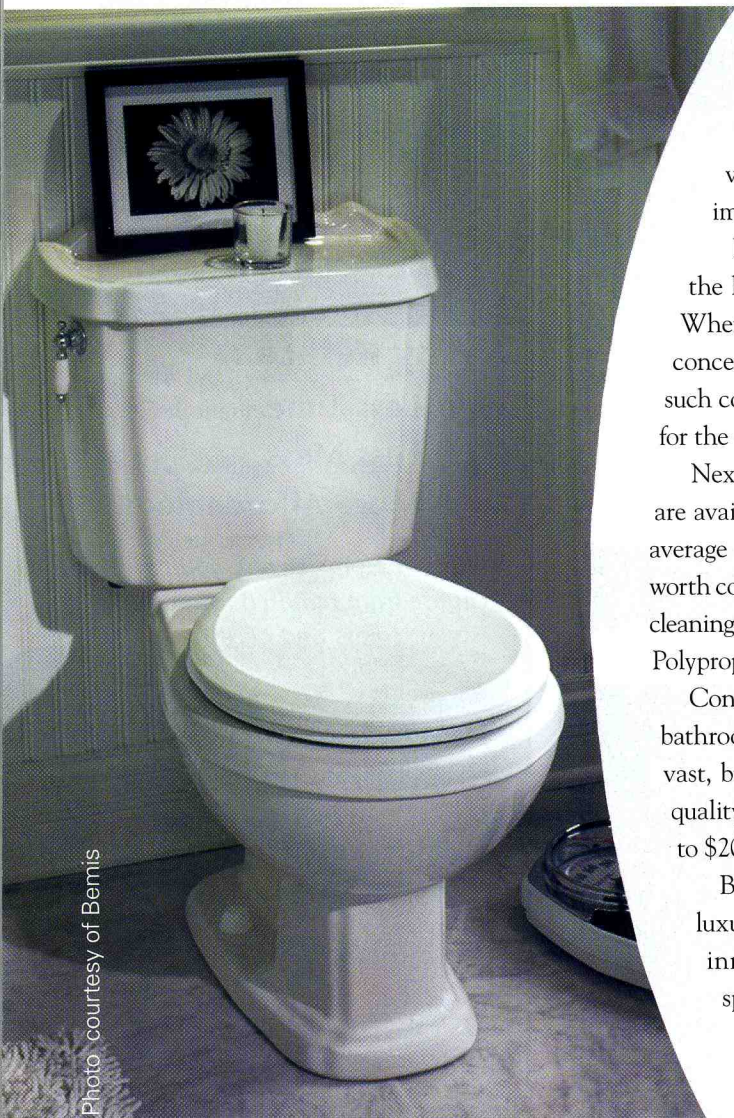


Photo courtesy of Bemis

**THE BEMIS EASY 2** features a soft-close lid that eliminates slamming.

Toilets are first and foremost utilitarian. We really only think of them when they're needed or aren't working properly. But according to Trudy McGinnis, certified kitchen, bath and interior designer, there's more to them than most people think. "Choices are vast when it comes to the selection of what might be considered the most important seating area in the home," she says.

New design innovations, along with environmental concerns, give the homeowner several factors to consider when shopping for a new toilet. When selecting a toilet, the shape and size of the bathroom should be the first concern. Since bathroom fixtures like the tub, shower and sink are stationary, such considerations are crucial in designing a bathroom that will function well for the user.

Next, assess your needs. Are you designing a child's bathroom? Lower toilets are available. Perhaps the new design is for a master suite where a higher-than-average toilet might be more accommodating. Finally, there are new amenities worth considering. Single-piece toilets, rather than the traditional two-piece, make cleaning easier. Soft-close lids, like the Bemis Easy 2 model (\$55), eliminate slamming. Polypropylene plastic seats outlast the traditional molded wood designs.

Consider the aesthetics of the room. Plumbing distributors offer full lines of bathroom fixtures, many in coordinated ensembles. Style and color options are vast, but expect to pay more for some options. The starting price for a high-quality basic white porcelain toilet is \$160 to \$200.

Bidets, once considered a luxury item, have inspired a new innovation called washlets, a specialized seat with a built-in warm-water cleansing



Photo courtesy of Ace Bidet

## Toilet Talk

Knowing these terms will help you in your search for the right toilet.

**Standard-gravity:** This is the basic toilet design. Flushing is dependent upon gravity forcing water from a tank down into the bowl, causing water and waste to be carried down the siphon to the sewer system. Recent innovations have greatly improved its performance in the last few years.

**Pressure-assisted:** Originally used primarily in commercial settings, this technology forces water into the bowl through a buildup of pressure. New innovations that reduce the noise level of this type of mechanism are making it a more viable option for the home.