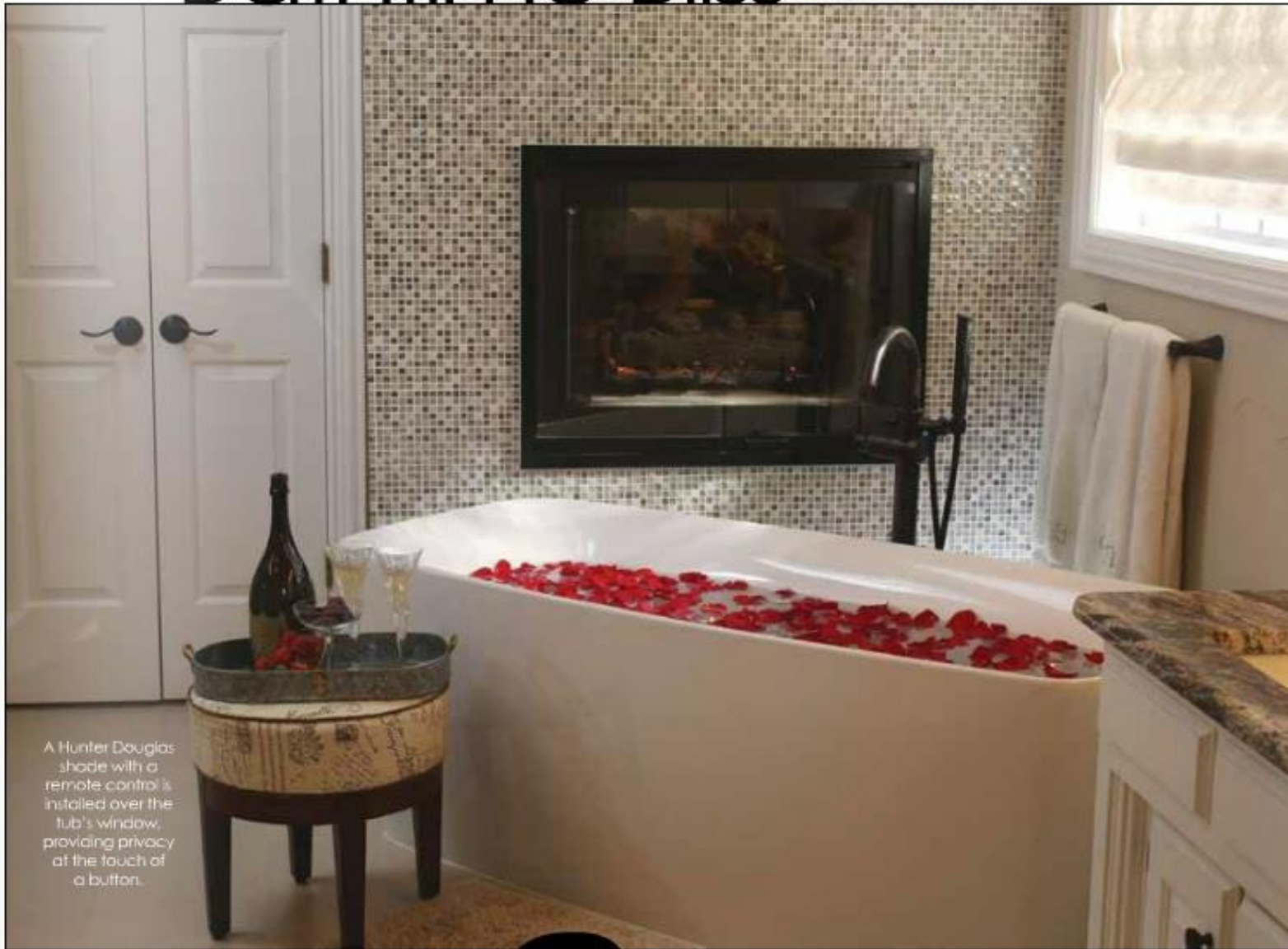


# Bathtime Bliss



A Hunter Douglas shade with a remote control is installed over the tub's window, providing privacy at the touch of a button.

Dim the lights, stoke the fire and soak in the luxury of alone time.

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By Lisa Martin Photos by Carolyn Cruz

As a working mother of three active boys, Jana Atkins longed for a place in her Southlake home to claim as a restful retreat. Previous owners had updated much of the 4,175-square-foot residence, built in the early 1990s, but the untouched master suite had begun to betray the home's age. In less than two months, Julie and David Walsh of Sterling Renovations transformed the bathroom from forgettable to fabulous, making the space Jana's new favorite in her house.



The homeowner's foremost request for her handsome, sleek master bath: one strongly feminine element in the form of a crystal chandelier.

## Romance It

Looking to add some sizzle to your bathroom's style? Designer Julie Walsh of Sterling Renovations has a few tips for turning your master bath into a romantic retreat.

"Lighting is key to the right vibe," says Walsh. "Light candles, turn on the fireplace and dim the overhead lights while you pour yourself a glass of wine and take a nice, long soak in the tub."

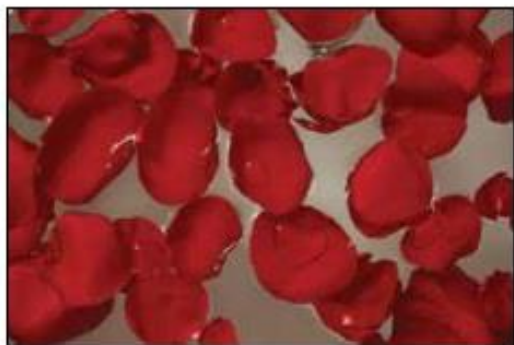
Beyond those enticing visuals, tantalize the other senses with a little help from the following:

**Touch** Invest in high-thread count, all-cotton robes, towels and bath mats. The more luxurious, the better.

**Sound** Fret not if your whole house isn't wired for sound. Instead, buy a portable sound dock that interfaces with your smartphone or tablet to access your favorite playlists.

**Smell** Burn a favorite candle. "For me, it's lemon verbena," says Walsh. "Never anything too sweet." Scented soaps, bath salts and sumptuous lotions also enhance the experience.

**Taste** Champagne? Chardonnay? Chocolate? Pick your poison and indulge while de-stressing in your favorite space.



Amp up the romance quotient with chilled Champagne, fine chocolates and fresh strawberries, then burn a scented candle for even more allure.

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"I can't say enough about it," enthuses Jana, a physician's assistant at a Keller-based dermatology practice. "We didn't change the footprint of the room, and we carried the oiled bronze hardware from the rest of the house for continuity, as was my personal preference, but we redid almost everything else to create a beautiful, timeless look."

Both Jana and husband Sean love the clean-lined slipper tub that serves as the room's focal point.

"We're seeing a lot of people taking out their built-in Jacuzzi-style tubs right now in favor of freestanding versions," explains Julie Walsh. While lava stone remains the hallmark of the highest-end tubs — with price tags to match their staggering weight — manufacturers have introduced high-gloss cast acrylic versions at a fraction of the cost. The acrylic American Standard tub in the couple's bath sets the transitional tone for the rest of the room.

"It's a little more modern and sculptural looking, which gave us a lot of options," says Walsh, who guided her clients toward the inky black granite with cream undertones that replaced the existing beige cultured marble on the countertops.

The transitional clean lines extend to the shower, which the design team gutted. Leak-resistant cement board and a waterproof membrane make





Simplicity and clean lines define the shower and vanity, including a niche that neatly corrals all manner of shampoos and soaps.

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sure the shower will stand the test of time. Porcelain tile from Arizona Tile, along with shower niches and a frameless glass door, marry form and function.

Proving a greater challenge was the see-through fireplace, an eyesore that dated the room and was rarely used by the Atkinses.

"I really don't encourage see-through fireplaces, because the person who's asleep in the bedroom can see when the other person turns on the bathroom light at 5 in the morning," says Walsh. "In this case, the fireplace was so bad that Jana and Sean actually hung a curtain over it."

The upgraded gas unit, with new tile, truly pops.

"It's almost an art piece," says Jana.

Adds Walsh: "There's a wow factor — that sleek bathtub with the fireplace." As a nod to practicality, Walsh installed an unfussy Hunter Douglas shade on a remote control over the tub's window, which provides privacy at the touch of a button.

To bring a dose of unabashed femininity to the space, Jana had one request:

"I wanted a chandelier, not a huge one, but something



Accessories including the pretty chandelier and red rose petals strewn in the bath transform the space into a sensual retreat.

dainty and small that fits the size of the room and is enough to draw the eye upward. What Julie found was perfect, not overwhelming at all, and it definitely does not offend my husband or my boys." [032](#)