SCENTED SHOWER CURTAIN LINER

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ABSTRACT
A device in the form of a scented or fragrant shower curtain or shower curtain liner is disclosed that allows convenient periodic replacement to reduce or eliminate the work and expense associated with cleaning and maintenance thereof, as well as to ensure continued release and dispersal of a selected scent or fragrance. The device may additionally include quick-release attachment structures to facilitate such periodic replacement. A method of maintaining a bathroom or shower facility in a clean and fragrant state is also disclosed using the device, especially for use in hotels or the like.
SCENTED SHOWER CURTAIN LINER

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates generally to bathtubs and showers, and more specifically, to a disposable scented flexible closure thereof.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Since the development of the shower, bathers and bath owners or managers have been plagued by the need for a barrier device to contain sprayed water, soap, and dirt within the bathtub or shower stall, thereby preventing accumulation thereof on the floor of the bathroom. A variety of different curtains, doors, or the like have been implemented for such a purpose with more or less success. Regardless of the design, however, such barrier devices suffer from the development and/or accumulation of unsightly and unsanitary water-spots, stains, soap-scum, mold, germs, bacteria, and the like. This disadvantage is compounded by an unpleasant odor accompanying such accumulation, which odor typically permeates the shower and the bathroom, making each uninviting and unpleasant to use.

[0003] Typically, to avoid such disadvantageous developments, regular cleaning is required, wherein such cleaning requires large amounts of time and effort, as well as special cleaning products. Further, the task is unpleasant and difficult, and is therefore frequently neglected, further promoting growth of mold, fungus, germs, and/or bacteria on the barrier. The growth of mold is not only unhealthy, potentially causing illness or allergic reactions, but further causes the unpleasant odor. Thus, proper maintenance and cleaning of shower curtains, or other shower closures, has been critical in maintaining a clean, inviting, and healthy bathroom facility.

[0004] The problems of mold, and the associated odors, are multiplied many times for businesses, such as hotels, fitness centers, spas, or the like, that provide numerous showering facilities for clients or customers. In such business settings, proper cleaning and maintenance of showering facilities can become unmanageable and can involve large costs in terms of supplies and time. In order to be profitable, these types of businesses must find a cost-efficient solution to maintaining shower curtains in a clean, pristine condition, or risk offending or harming their customers or clients via unsightly accumulation of dirt, water-spots, stains, germs, bacteria, and mold, including the associated unpleasant odor.

[0005] Thus, it is readily apparent that there exists an unmet need for a shower closure barrier that reduces or eliminates the need for regular cleaning and/or maintenance thereof, and which prevents or reduces the pervasion of unpleasant odors, especially those associated with mold or the like.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Briefly described, in a preferred embodiment, the present invention overcomes the above-mentioned disadvantages and meets the recognized need for such a device by providing a disposable flexible shower curtain including a selected volatile fragrance included therewithin, and a method of use thereof.

[0007] The shower curtain is preferably formed of a sheet of polymeric material impregnated with a volatile fragrant compound that may escape and provide a selected desired scent. Such release preferably occurs at a substantially steady rate over time, until the polymeric material is substantially devoid of the fragrant compound. At such a time, the shower curtain is preferably disposed and a new shower curtain is preferably installed in its place to replenish the supply of a selected scent in the shower or bathroom. Additionally, the new shower curtain is preferably clean, whereby the first shower curtain need not be cleaned due to its replacement.

[0008] The volatile fragrant compound is preferably made of natural and/or artificial compounds, such as essential oils and synthetic fragrances. The fragrant compound preferably migrates through the polymeric material, either in gas or liquid state, and escapes or evaporates into the surrounding atmosphere, whereby it may provide a scent that permeates a shower, bathroom, or the like, such as via diffusion. The volatile fragrant compound is preferably selected to provide the scent a flower, an herb, a tree, or other plant, a fruit, a spice, or other food, or any other desired scent that a user may find appealing, calming, inviting, or otherwise pleasing to the user. Thus, a user, such as an owner of manager of the shower facility may preferably select a shower curtain containing a fragrant compound, and install the selected shower curtain to provide the desired scent in the shower or bathroom. Furthermore, the user may preferably change or replenish the scent by replacing at least a portion of the shower curtain with a new portion having the same or different fragrant compound.

[0009] The removal and installation of the shower curtain of the present invention is preferably accomplished via quick-release attachment means provided thereon for engagement with a support structure, such as a shower curtain rod. Preferably, the quick-release attachment means comprises a snap mechanism, a magnet, a hook-and-loop fastener system, or the like, whereby an installation time of the shower curtain may be greatly reduced, thereby reducing the strain associated with attaching the curtain at an elevated location, and thereby making replacement of the shower curtain faster, easier, more convenient, and more cost effective for an owner, housekeeping personnel, custodial personnel, or the like. Most preferably, the shower curtain is designed to attach to a conventional curtain rod using conventional fastening systems, such as rings wherein a first portion of the shower curtain remains attached to the shower curtain rod while another portion, such as a lower portion, is removed and replaced with a new lower portion of a shower curtain.

[0010] According to its major aspects and broadly stated, the present invention, in its preferred form, is a scented shower curtain for use in providing a selected scent to a shower, bathroom, or the like, in order to maintain a fresh, clean, or otherwise pleasing scent thereabout. Such scent may preferably mask other unpleasant odors present in the shower or bathroom, or may simply add a preferred scent where none would otherwise be present.

[0011] Accordingly, one feature and advantage of the present invention is its ability to provide an easily replaceable shower curtain, or a portion thereof, to facilitate maintenance thereof in a clean state.

[0012] Another feature and advantage of the present invention is its ability to provide an easily replaceable scented shower curtain to facilitate maintenance thereof in a fragrant state.

[0013] Another feature and advantage of the present invention is its ability to indicate when the shower curtain needs to be replaced via an exhaustion of the selected scent.

[0014] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent to those ordi-
narily skilled in the art after reading the following Detailed Description and Claims in light of the accompanying drawing Figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0015] Accordingly, the present invention will be understood best through consideration of, and with reference to, the following drawing Figures, viewed in conjunction with the Detailed Description referring thereto, in which like reference numbers throughout the various Figures designate like structure and in which:

[0016] FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a scented shower curtain according to the present invention; and

[0017] FIG. 2 is a perspective view of an alternative shower curtain according to the present invention.

[0018] It is to be noted that the drawings presented are intended solely for the purpose of illustration and that they are, therefore, neither desired nor intended to limit the invention to any or all of the exact details of construction shown, except insofar as they may be deemed essential to the claimed invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0019] In describing preferred embodiments of the present invention illustrated in the Figures, specific terminology is employed for the sake of clarity. The invention, however, is not intended to be limited to the specific terminology so selected, and it is to be understood that each specific element includes all technical equivalents that operate in a similar manner to accomplish a similar purpose.

[0020] In that form of the preferred embodiment of the present invention chosen for purposes of illustration, FIG. 1 shows shower curtain 100 attached to shower curtain rod R in shower S of bathroom B. Shower curtain 100 preferably includes flexible polymeric sheet 110, formed with a desired length and width to completely enclose an open portion of shower S, whereby water sprayed from shower head H may preferably be contained within shower S and not escape to the rest of bathroom B. Polymeric sheet 110 preferably has a thickness that allows shower curtain 100 to flex easily, whereby a user may access shower S by opening and closing shower curtain 100 via sliding along shower curtain rod R. Additionally, flexible polymeric sheet 110 preferably includes a selected fragrant compound, whereby shower curtain 100 preferably disperses a selected scent through shower S and bathroom B.

[0021] Thus, any unpleasant odor in shower S or bathroom B, such as a mold odor, a waste odor, the odor of soiled clothing, linens, or the like, is preferably masked or eliminated by release of the selected fragrant compound from polymeric sheet 110 at a substantially steady rate. Furthermore, conventional shower curtains typically include an unpleasant odor, especially when new, due to off-gassing of volatile organic compounds of manufacture from the curtain material. Such unpleasant odor may discourage replacement of the shower curtain, whereby accumulation of dirt and mold may occur. The release of the selected fragrant compound of shower curtain 100 of the present invention preferably ameliorates such unpleasant odor, whereby a new shower curtain 100 may preferably be used to replace a soiled or worn shower curtain without filling shower S or bathroom B with an unpleasant “plastic” odor. As such, shower curtain 100 preferably enables frequent replacement thereof to avoid accumulation of dirt, soap-scum, water-spots, mold, or the like, and offsets or avoids the frequent introduction of unpleasant vapors released from a new shower curtain.

[0022] Shower curtain 100 preferably includes attachment means, such as grommets 115, for attaching shower curtain 100 to shower curtain rod R. Specifically, grommets 115 preferably facilitate attachment of shower curtain 100 to shower curtain rod R via quick-release attachment means 120. Quick-release attachment means 120 may be formed as clip 121, hook 123, strap 125, or the like, whereby grommets 115 may be quickly engaged therewith to support shower curtain 100. Strap 125 is preferably attached to shower curtain 100 such as via grommet 115, by stitching, adhesive, or may be formed as a unitary sheet therewith. Strap 125 preferably includes a magnetic closure, a snap closure, a hook-and-loop fastener, or the like, to encircle shower curtain rod R. Quick-release attachment means 120 preferably reduce a time necessary to attach shower curtain 100 to shower curtain rod R, thereby reducing the cost and burden associated with replacing a shower curtain, such as when the shower curtain has become soiled, damaged, or otherwise requires replacement.

[0023] As will be understood by those ordinarily skilled in the art, grommets 115 may be formed of metal, plastic, or the like. Furthermore, grommets 115 may optionally be replaced by, or bolstered by, reinforced sections, rivets, welds, or other structures adapted to facilitate secure and durable attachment of shower curtain 100 to shower curtain rod R, or other similar or conventional support structure.

[0024] Alternatively, however, conventional shower curtain rings 140 may be used to attach shower curtain 100 to shower curtain rod R via grommets 115. Preferably, when conventional shower curtain rings 140 are used, shower curtain 200 is used whereby quick-release attachment means 120 in the form of hook-and-loop fastener system 210 may be used to connect first portion 201 to second portion 202 of shower curtain 200. As such, conventional rings 140 may preferably be used to attach first portion 201 to shower curtain rod R, even though such conventional rings 140 do not provide for quick release and/or attachment because quick-release attachment means 120 allow first portion 201 to remain attached to shower curtain rod R while continuing to allow for quick replacement of second portion 202.

[0025] First portion 201 is preferably relatively small dimensionally compared to second portion 202, whereby first portion 201 is preferably not disposed in a position where it is likely to become soiled or wet, and whereby an amount of fragrant compound carried therein may be small compared to an amount carried by second portion 202. Thus, when second portion 202 becomes soiled, damaged, and/or exhausted of the fragrant compound, second portion may preferably be removed from first section 201, and thereby from shower curtain rod R, for replacement via quick-release attachment means 120. Meanwhile, first portion 201 may remain attached to shower curtain rod R without adverse effect due to the avoidance of any substantial accumulation of dirt, water-spots, germs, bacteria, mold, or the like, due to its elevated placement. As will be readily understood by those ordinarily skilled in the art, magnets, adhesives, snaps, buttons, hooks, or the like may be used in place of, or in conjunction with hook portion 210a and loop portion 210b.

[0026] As an alternative, shower curtain 100 may optionally be formed as a woven sheet, instead of a solid sheet, such as a sheet formed from natural fibers, synthetic fibers, treated
fibers, or coated fibers, without departing from the scope and spirit of the present invention, so long as shower curtain 100 may be impregnated with, covered with, or otherwise include, the fragrant compound, such as a volatile compound. Such fragrant compound is preferably selected from natural compounds, having a scent such as the scent of one or more flower, herb, tree, bush, fruit, or the like, food scents, but may be any desired compound, including artificial compounds, whereby a user's preference of scent may be accommodated. The fragrant compound is preferably formed as a volatile liquid which is retained within polymeric sheet 110, or within the fibers or coating of a woven sheet, whereby the volatile liquid may preferably evaporate and diffuse out of shower curtain 100 into the surrounding atmosphere in shower S and/or bathroom B at a substantially constant rate.

[0027] Although the rate of release of the fragrant compound is described as substantially constant, it will be readily apparent to one having ordinary skill in the art that the fragrant compound may be selected such that the rate of release thereof from shower curtain 100 and/or 200 may be affected by one or more various factors, including, but not limited to, temperature, humidity, air flow, ambient pressures, chemical or biological action, or the like, whereby the rate of release of the fragrant compound may vary with changing factors. Furthermore, the fragrant compound may be selected to preferably release from shower curtain 100 and/or 200 at an increased rate during selected times. For example, the fragrant compound may be selected to release at an increased rate with increasing ambient temperature or humidity, whereby the rate of release will increase during a time when a user is taking a warm or hot shower, whereby the user will experience an increase intensity of the selected scent during such times.

[0028] Preferably, an amount of the fragrant compound included in shower curtain 100 is preferably selected such that the fragrant compound is substantially exhausted or nearly exhausted, and therefore no longer capable of providing the selected scent to shower S or bathroom B, at a time when shower curtain 100 has become soiled from normal use of shower S through the accumulation of water-spots, soap-scum, mold, or the like. Thus, when shower curtain 100 is ready for disposal as a result of soiling through ordinary use, substantially no fragrant compound is wasted. Likewise, when shower curtain 100 is ready for disposal as a result of diffusion of substantially all of the fragrant compound, shower curtain 100 is nearing the end of its useful life without cleaning. Thus, the substantially constant diffusion of the fragrant compound to the atmosphere surrounding shower curtain 100 preferably determines a lifetime thereof ending with the substantial exhaustion of the fragrant compound. When shower curtain 100 has not yet reached the end of the lifetime, the fragrant compound preferably diffuses out from shower curtain 100, indicating that shower curtain 100 does not need replacement. Furthermore, when the supply of fragrant compound is substantially exhausted through diffusion, or other release mechanism, the absence of the scent in shower S and bathroom B preferably indicates that the end of the lifetime has been reached, and that replacement of shower curtain 100 is necessary.

[0029] As stated above, shower curtain 100 is preferably supplied, such as during manufacture thereof, with a selected amount of the fragrant compound. The selected amount preferably determines the lifetime of shower curtain 100, and is preferably selected such that the arrival of the end of the useful lifetime of shower curtain 100 preferably coincides with, and indicates, the need to change shower curtain 100 due to the accumulation of dirt, soap-scum, water-spots, mold, or the like.

[0030] As will be understood by those ordinarily skilled in the art, the scented shower curtain of the present invention, and the method of use thereof, may include, be combined with, or otherwise incorporate or integrate materials or compounds, including coatings, fluids, or the like, having antibacterial, anti-fungal, and/or self-cleaning properties, as well as materials, such as polymers or other materials, resistant to such materials, whereby shower curtains including a selected fragrant compound may additionally resist, inhibit, or otherwise prevent the unsightly or unhealthy accumulation of dirt, water-spots, bacteria, germs, mold, or the like.

[0031] Having thus described exemplary embodiments of the present invention, it should be noted that those skilled in the art that the within disclosures are exemplary only and that various other alternatives, adaptations, and modifications may be made within the scope and spirit of the present invention. For example, shower curtain 100 and/or 200 may be formed having a dimension greater than or less than any corresponding dimension of shower S, whereby shower curtain 100 and/or 200 may not be capable of completely or even partially containing water within shower S but may still be capable of providing the selected scent, being quickly replaced, and indicating a time for such replacement, and/or the time for replacement of a water barrier device, via exhaustion of the fragrant compound therefrom. Similarly, shower curtain 100 and/or 200 may be formed as a water-permeable member, whereby it would not be suitable for water containment, but whereby the other benefits of the invention may be enabled. Likewise, shower curtain 100 and/or 200 may be disposed adjacent to a separate water barrier device, and may provide decoration for bathroom B, or may be disposed between a separate decorative curtain and a water barrier. These and various other alternative arrangements, shapes, sizes, and the like, will be apparent to those ordinarily skilled in the art, and are deemed to be within the scope of the present invention. Accordingly, the present invention is not limited to the specific embodiments as illustrated herein, but is only limited by the following claims.

What is claimed is at least:

1. A shower curtain comprising:
a body formed as a generally thin and flexible sheet, wherein said body includes means for attachment and release for use with a support structure adapted to support said body, and

wherein said body is formed of a material including a fragrant compound, said fragrant compound emanating from said material and dispersing to provide a selected user-perceivable scent.

2. A disposable shower closure barrier comprising:
a first waterproof film containing a volatile compound; and attachment means for securing said first waterproof film to a curtain rod, said attachment means enabling rapid engagement and disengagement of said first waterproof film with said curtain rod, whereby said first waterproof film may be removed from said curtain rod for disposal at a time selected from the group consisting of a time when said first waterproof
film is soiled and a time when said first waterproof film is substantially devoid of said volatile compound, and whereby a second waterproof film containing a volatile compound may be installed in the place of said first waterproof film.

3. A method of maintaining a shower in a clean state comprising the steps of:
   removing a first shower curtain at a time selected from the group consisting of a time when said first shower curtain is soiled and a time when said first shower curtain is devoid of a fragrant compound; and
   installing a second shower curtain in the place of said first shower curtain, said second shower curtain being clean and containing a fragrant compound,
   thereby avoiding cleaning said first shower curtain and providing a selected scent to the shower.

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