



It's Easy to Go Green

Incorporate sustainable materials when remodeling to preserve the environment and save energy

Let's face it, the whole country is going green. Everywhere you turn, information is available on green products and materials. It's no wonder Americans purchased more than 300 million Energy Star appliances in 2006. Why? We all feel a responsibility in preserving the environment and saving energy resources. All around the country, people are incorporating sustainable materials to their remodeling projects and new home construction.

There are many small projects we can all do to green up our homes and lighten the footprint we leave on the planet. For instance, installing energy efficient lighting, including fluorescents. The new florescent fixtures give high quality light without the flicker. Compact fluorescents use half of the energy and last 10 times longer than standard bulbs.

When shopping for appliances, always look for the Energy Star label. Energy Star-rated appliances are much more efficient and use less electricity which in turn will save you money on your electric bill.

When it comes to water conservation, consider replacing your water hungry grass with drought tolerant native plants and grasses. They require less water and are more pest and disease resistant. Also, planting a shade tree on the south side of your house will help with summer cooling costs.

Become indoor-water conscience. Low-flow shower heads, faucets and toilets can reduce water usage up to 40 percent. A new washing machine can save you \$100 yearly on your water bill.

The use of sustainable natural materials saves our resources for future generations while creating a healthier home. Certified hardwoods for cabinet and flooring are now readily available. Certified wood products have been grown and harvested under specific forest management criteria. Many paints, adhesives and carpets are now available with a low VOC rating helping to create a healthy home.

As for me, while I have no plans to replace our custom-built cherry kitchen cabinets with bamboo or wheat board, I am gradually incorporating several energy-efficient home improvements. For instance, I recently installed an attic fan, which removes the hot attic air when it reaches a certain temperature, keeping our house cooler without the use of air conditioning. Next on my list is to investigate the use of solar energy. Windmills anyone? **HB**

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