

## Building a New, Green Home

What makes a home green?

By Brad Schmett

What makes a home green? Does it need to be solar powered? Must it have radiant floor heating? Is it built from recycled materials only? Should it be tiny, leaving a small footprint?

While smaller is better in the green building world, there are many different ways to increase the greenness of a new home. The term green refers not only to building materials, but also to the energy efficiency, human healthiness, design, construction, maintenance, operation and removal of waste. Building green means taking a holistic approach to every aspect of the building process.

### Green Building Efficiency

Efficiency is important in building green. To add to the efficiency of your new home you could choose radiant floor heating, passive solar, an on-demand tankless water heater and other efficient appliances, such as an Energy Star® refrigerator. For water efficiency you may choose low-flow fixtures, such as toilets, showerheads and faucets that can save substantial amounts of water.

You may choose compact fluorescent bulbs for the inside of your home and solar powered lights for the outside. When it comes to windows, you may opt for double insulated or Low-E (low-emissivity) windows to control heat transfer. Low-E windows are thought to reduce energy loss by as much as 35-50%. When it comes to building green and efficient, there are countless ways to conserve all natural energy sources.

### A Green Home Equals Low Toxicity

One aspect of building green is to reduce the amount of toxicity in your home. When building new, there are a wide variety of safe, non-hazardous products to choose from. Choosing safe products not only insures better health for the environment, but also for you and your family.

A few products to think about are: non-toxic organic oil wood finishes, non-toxic stains, low volatile organic compound (VOC) paints and non-toxic solvent-free construction adhesives. Choosing formaldehyde-free, sustainably-grown wood for construction and flooring also lowers toxicity. When building, make sure to research and ask questions about every item you are using and lower the amount of pollutants in your home.

### Environmental Impact

While choosing energy efficiency and non-toxic chemicals is important for a green home, the environmental impact of your home may be one of the largest green factors. Keeping forestry to a minimum and re-using every piece of lumber from site clearing can greatly lessen your environmental impact. Using recycled materials, such as glass for mosaics, recycled granite for countertops and using recycled doors, windows, trim and cabinets are all great green choices.

Choosing natural and renewable materials, such as stones, bamboo and straw, can not only be aesthetically pleasing, but can add to the sustainability of your new, green home. Building green also involves taking care of proper erosion control and proper rainwater drainage and run-off, through green rooftops and rain gardens.

### Green Building: The Ease and Excitement

Green building doesn't have to be daunting. There are many certified green builders that can lend a hand, and if you love learning new information, it can be exciting. You may find joy in collecting river stones for a stone wall, or taking every tree's life into account when site clearing. Green building also offers peace of mind; knowing you are choosing a healthier, more sustainable way of life can be priceless.