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WITH CHRISTOPHER LOWELL

It's Good TO BE GREEN!

Local professionals share how building and remodeling green is easier than you think

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For both Sharon Patterson, LEED AP and founder of Om Your Home, and Suzie Hall, LEED AP, ASID, and president of Cornerstone Design, building and remodeling green is something everyone needs to think about and begin to implement.

“People are jumping on the [green] bandwagon left and right because they know it’s not extreme. It just makes good sense for our families, our children, our planet, and our resources,” says Hall.

Nearly everyone knows about energy-efficient appliances, but there are so many more products that are good for both the Earth and people.

“Being green is a shift in conscience. The amount you drive makes a difference; people get that quickly. The awareness that your homes have a significant effect on the emissions problem is big,” says Patterson. Regular flooring, paints, appliances, lightbulbs, and many other products all contribute to the breakdown of the environment, and many professionals are speculating that these products are also having an adverse effect on our health and quality of life.

There are myriad questions to ask when deciding to go green. Is the product renewable? Bamboo, linoleum, and Marmoleum flooring come from natural products that grow rapidly, as opposed to hardwood, vinyl, and many kinds of carpets and pads. Hall notes, “Carpet pad can off-gas for up to 25 years. If you think about kids playing on the floor and harmful toxins coming up from your floor, that’s a no-brainer.”

Does it make sense to import granite and other materials from half-way across the globe when sustainable, closer-to-home products are available? Linoleum can create an almost leather-like feel on countertops, and it is durable. Other options are recycled-paper countertops called Paperstone or recycled glass chips in an epoxy resin. These surfaces



⌚ These kitchen windows were placed in such a way as to capture prevailing summer winds from the northwest.

⌚ From utilizing reclaimed wood and low-VOC paint to xeriscaping, area homeowners can do a lot to be green.

are durable and offer a variety of colors, sizes, and textures—all without harming the earth.

For your walls, consider American clay plaster. This natural plaster for the walls and ceilings gives a nice, naturally textured look without

using artificial colors or pigments. It also has no harmful VOCs (volatile organic compounds), the toxins you want to avoid whenever possible.

Both women stress water conservation as a big part of thinking green. Xeriscaping is a way of acclimating plants to the environment without having to drench them in water. Another option is to purchase plants indigenous to the region that have evolved to survive in the climate.

Finally, think about windows, roofs, and insulation. Windows can keep houses warm in the winter and cool in the summer when properly placed and installed. Metal roofs allow for the collection of clean water, which can be used for watering gardens and yards. Insulation can be recycled denim or soy-based spray-foam kinds.

While the cost of going green can still be somewhat on the high end, both women say it is affordable, especially if you are thinking long-term. Hall says, “Once we get past the cost-fear factor with clients, then it’s really fun, and it makes design meaningful. Designing a beautiful space is wonderful, but designing a healthy and beautiful space is much better.”

Patterson says, “There’s no perfect green—no perfectly sustainable. As long as we’re moving toward sustainability, that is the right thing.” ■

Photos courtesy of Om Your Home