

TIPS ON CREATING AN ECO-FRIENDLY HOME TO NURTURE YOUR HEALTH CINDY SIEGENFELD

GREEN HOUSE

EPA studies have shown that indoor air pollutants are two to five times higher than those found in outdoor air. As the cold winter months draw near and we begin to spend more time indoors, consider the kinds of chemicals you and your family may be exposed to on a daily basis. With allergies, respiratory ailments and cancer on the rise, it is time to start taking a closer look at the products you use and their impact on your health, the environment and the planet you will leave to your children. Now, more than ever, it is important to be a health-conscious consumer, which doesn't mean giving up on function, beauty, or comfort!

Take to the Floor

When redecorating a room, carpets should be the first thing removed. They are filled with allergens, tracked-in dirt, animal dander, dust mites, mold and VOCs (volatile organic chemicals)—toxins vaporized into the air. Where possible, replace carpeting with untreated natural fiber area rugs that are washable or with low-VOC carpeting. Clean your carpets using a HEPA filter vacuum which will pick up microscopic particles. Wood floors are a great alternative to carpeting, and reclaimed wood from a historic building or dismantled barn house can add charm to a home. Recycled glass tile, local slate and Marmoleum® are other alternatives. For maintenance, stay away from caustic cleaners and those containing bleach or ammonia; use citrus cleaners or a homemade 50/50 vinegar-and-water mix instead.

Resources: earthweave.com, glasstile.com, conklinsbarnwood.com, mountainlumber.com, consciousflooring.com

CONVENTIONAL PAINT COMPANIES LIKE BENJAMIN MOORE AND CORONADO NOW OFFER A SELECTION OF ECO-FRIENDLY PAINTS, LIKE MOORE'S PRISTINE ECO SPEC AND CORONADO'S AIR-CARE COATINGS. EVEN MORE EXCITING: ANNA SOVA'S MILK-BASED PAINT IS NO-VOC AND HAS THE AROMATHERAPY OF A MILK SHAKE!

What's on the Walls?

Deciding on what color you are going to paint a room shouldn't be your only decision. What brand of paint or stain you choose is even more important. Look for paints labeled "low-VOC" or "no-VOC," and avoid the ones that use petrochemicals, formaldehyde, benzene, toluene or xylene. Conventional paint companies like Benjamin Moore and Coronado now offer a selection of eco-friendly paints, like Moore's Pristine Eco Spec and Coronado's Air-Care coatings. Even more exciting: Anna Sova's milk-based paint is no-VOC and has the aromatherapy of a milk shake! The company has an incredible palette of colors, but you must be careful not to use it in bathrooms or kitchens, because just like milk, it too can sour.

Resources: annasova.com, bestpaintco.com, safecoatpaint.com

Safe Seating

The most important question you should ask about your upholstered furniture is, "What lies beneath?" Flame retardant chemicals known as PBDEs (polybrominated diphenylethers) have been added to polyurethane foam (which is used in most upholstered furniture) for the past 30 years. The U.S. is one of the largest consumers and manufacturers of PBDEs. Scientists are concerned that these chemicals can cause harmful effects when accumulated in the environment and in human tissues. While manufacturers are not required to disclose the use of PBDEs to consumers, you may ask companies what flame retardants were used in their products. Try to purchase pieces that are PBDE-free, if possible, as well as products that are naturally flame resistant. Furniture made with recycled products is also an environmentally "green" thing to do. Surf the net for fun, unique and innovative items. Your eco-friendly furniture will certainly be a conversation piece for company.

Resources: furniture.com, mitchellgold.com, natuzzi.com, www.oldegoodthings.com