

# Update your home for green living

by MARYANN BOUCHE

Green ideas, not to mention products, continue to sprout as homeowners look for ways to reduce utility bills, add value to their homes and help the environment.

For remodeling projects big or small, environmentally friendly and energy-efficient products promise to make your home look better and work better.

## What does green look like?

Green Built Home is a green-building initiative administered throughout Wisconsin, and it certifies that new homes and remodeling projects meet sustainable building and energy standards.

Your home improvements can be Green Built Home-certified by submitting forms that show the project meets the program's requirements. To learn more, download the remodeler's checklist at [greenbuilthome.org/owner/checklists.php](http://greenbuilthome.org/owner/checklists.php).

Most green building materials fall into one or more of the following categories, according to [greenbuilthome.org](http://greenbuilthome.org):

- **Recycled-content.** A portion of the product is made with materials that might otherwise go to the landfill.
- **Durable.** The product will last longer and require less maintenance.
- **Made with renewable resources.** The resource from which the material is made can be readily replenished.
- **Resource efficient.** The product was designed to use fewer materials more efficiently.
- **Healthier.** The products are non-toxic or have reduced chemical content compared to other products.

- **Locally produced materials.** Long-distance transport of building materials can be very energy intensive.

"Going green in home remodeling is good for everybody's sake — the client and the world," said Francis Jones, CKBD, Callen Design Group in Muskego. He considers it important to present options to his clients that are energy efficient and eco-friendly.

One example is cabinetry. Selections include species grown specifically for making wood products, such as wenge, and wood from trees that were cut in ways mindful of the environment.

"Also, there are manufacturers who practice environmental stewardship during the manufacturing process, such as recycling their materials, reducing their energy use and minimizing scrap," Jones said.

The hunt for green choices has led to some products from the past. "Marmoleum, which is like the old linoleum flooring, is made of oil from the linseed plant," he said. "There's also cork flooring. Cork comes from the tree's bark, which grows back. Cork flooring is durable and comfortable to stand on; it's available in different colors."

Jones said his customers often select energy-efficient ENERGY STAR appliances, and water-efficient faucets, toilets and showers.

"Lighting is something we work hard on in our designs," he said. Incorporating CFLs (compact fluorescent light bulbs) and LEDs (light emitting diodes) cuts electricity consumption.

Other green home improvements include adding insulation, installing proper ventilation in bathrooms and kitchens, and using low- or no-VOC paints. VOC stands for volatile organic compounds; standard paints may contain chemicals that release

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VOCs, which can cause physical problems in people sensitive to the chemicals.

## Renewable energy ideas

Remodeling projects that use solar power to heat water or keep the lights on are getting more attention from homeowners. A Solar Panel Replica House presented by Hot Water Products will be displayed at the Milwaukee/NARI Fall Home & Remodeling Show. The life-size solar thermal system will show how to incorporate energy-saving solar-power systems into existing buildings.

Interested in renewable energy for your home? You can find information about tax incentives, cash-back rewards and grants at [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com).

## 7 Ways to bring home the green

Use **non-toxic** paints and sealants

Install programmable thermostats

Invest in **energy-efficient** appliances

Install **natural** flooring

Choose **natural** fiber rugs and fabrics

Specify **energy-efficient** lighting

Landscape with **native** plants