

12 Ways to go Green

An interior designer's earth-friendly
BY PATRICIA GAYLOR



GREEN IS THE NEW NEUTRAL

The author kept one eye on the environment when she designed the interior of the Not So Big Showhouse. Throughout the house, she specified furnishings and finishes with both beauty and sustainability in mind.

ideas go easily from Sarah Susanka's showhouse to your house

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of working with architect Sarah Susanka on her Not So Big Showhouse at the International Builders' Show in Orlando, Fla. As an interior designer, I share Sarah's appreciation for simple, timeless design, and we both place a premium on quality materials and sustainability.

Because thousands of people would visit the house, I knew the materials and furnishings we selected would have to be beautiful—and send the message that there

are many environmentally responsible choices out there (some greener, some more practical, and some more affordable than others). I wanted to give people something to think about when they build, renovate, or redecorate.

When you specify products for a showhouse, you have free rein on the design side, but you're often limited by the willingness of manufacturers to participate in the project. So keep in mind that the products you see here are just a few of the hundreds of green choices you can make everyday.



1 Hemp fabric

WHY Hemp grows quickly, and no chemicals are used in its processing, from cultivation to finished product. I selected brown and natural-colored fabrics from Hemp Basics to cover pillows in the living room. The company carries an extensive line of dyed and natural hemp, all attractive, durable, and well priced.

COST \$10 to \$16 a yard.

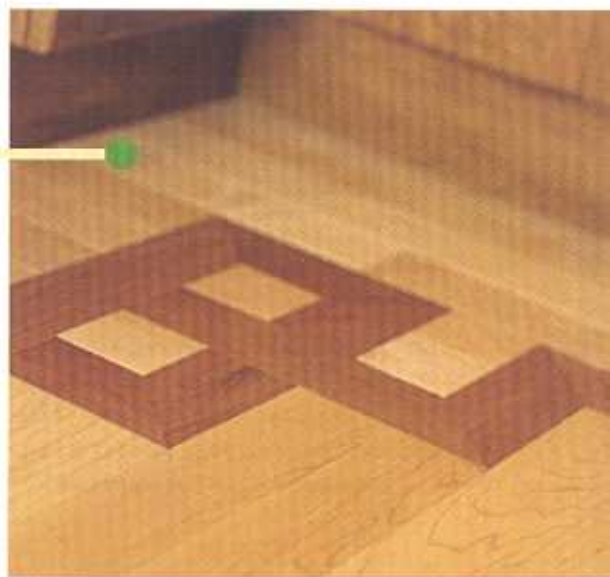
OR TRY Organic cotton, Tencel, or flax. Organic cotton is grown without pesticides; Tencel, made from cellulose fiber, is a by-product of wood; and flax, or linen, is made from the flax plant.

2 Hardwood flooring

WHY Hardwood has always been a classic choice for beautiful and durable flooring, but is it an environmentally responsible choice? Yes, if the wood is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, an organization that encourages responsible management of the world's forests. I chose an engineered maple floor by Mirage with a decorative cherry border, a natural water-based stain, and a low-VOC finish (see #6, p. 61).

COST \$7 to \$15 or more per square foot, plus installation.

OR TRY Ecotimber, which sells quality flooring from FSC-managed forests, as well as reclaimed wood and wood alternatives, like bamboo.





3 Marmoleum flooring

WHY I chose Marmoleum for the laundry room because it's a resilient floor covering made from natural ingredients—linseed oil, wood flour, resins, pigments, and jute. These components provide natural antibacterial properties that prevent microorganisms from multiplying, so Marmoleum is used widely in hospitals and other health-care facilities. It comes in endless color combinations and beautiful border designs, and in sheet form as well as tile squares.

COST \$4 to \$6 a square foot, plus installation.

OR TRY Cork flooring, which is attractive and comfortable underfoot. Cork is harvested every decade from the bark of the cork oak tree, a process that prolongs the life of the tree. A cork oak can live as long as 100 years.

4 Shades that save energy

WHY To minimize the effects of direct sun in summer and heat loss in the colder months, I chose Duette honeycomb shades by Hunter Douglas for a large window on the stair landing. The PowerRise motorized system requires no internal wiring, and it allows you to raise and lower the shade with a battery-operated remote control. For the bedrooms, I selected Hunter Douglas's Trio, an energy-efficient cellular shade that also has the capacity to work like a venetian blind, with movable vanes that allow fresh air and light into a room.

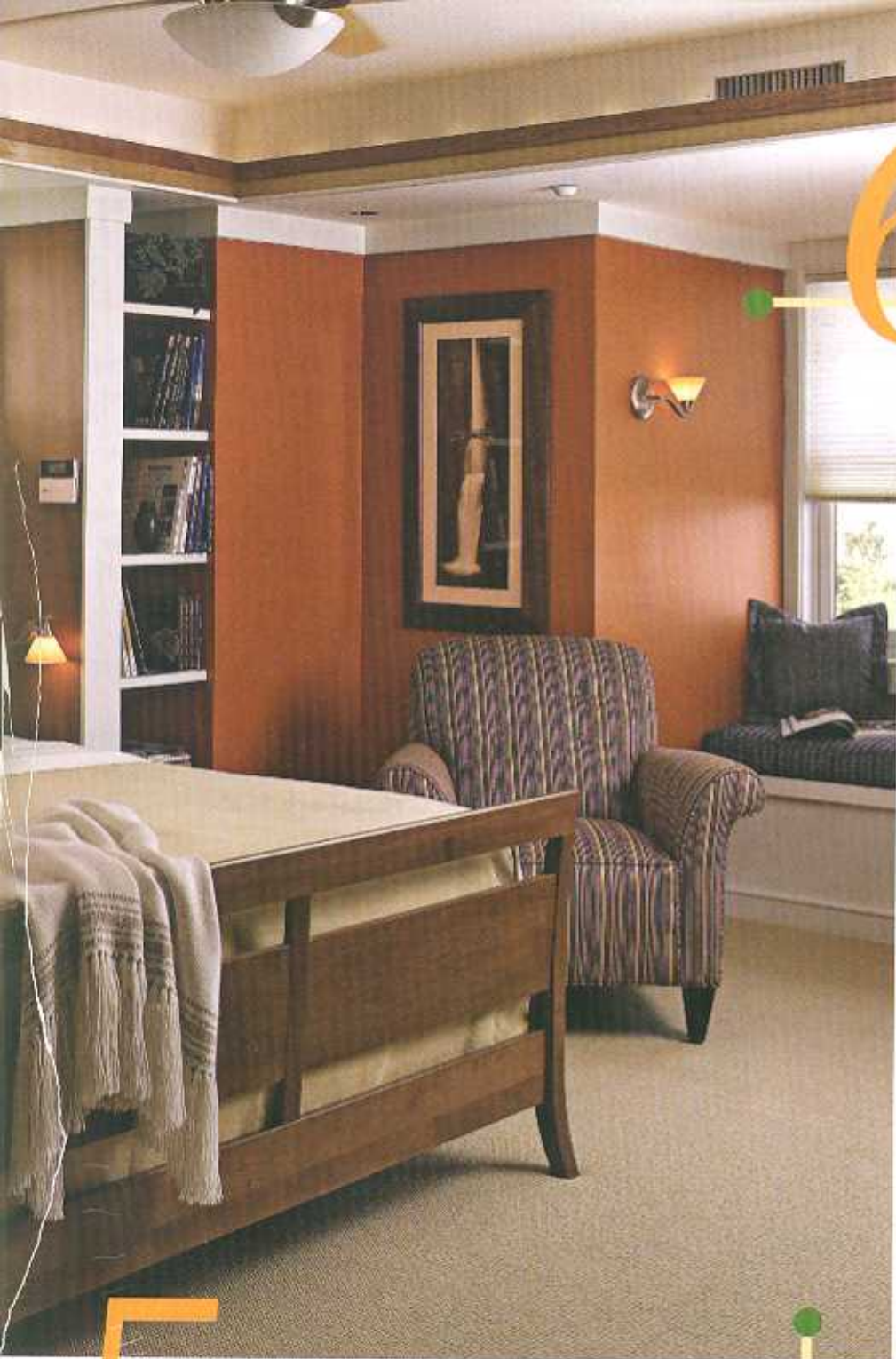
COST Varies by fabric and size; for an average 32- by 48-inch window, \$433 to \$599 for Duette with PowerRise; \$353 to \$388 for Trio.

OR TRY Solar shades, if you want to filter and diffuse bright sunlight, and privacy isn't an issue. Made of woven PVC, these sheer roller shades cut down on heat gain and reduce the sun's glare, protecting your furniture and rugs from damaging UV rays.



THREE-IN-ONE WINDOWS Control light, heat, and privacy with fabric window coverings that feature a honeycomb design (above) or a cellular-vane design (right).



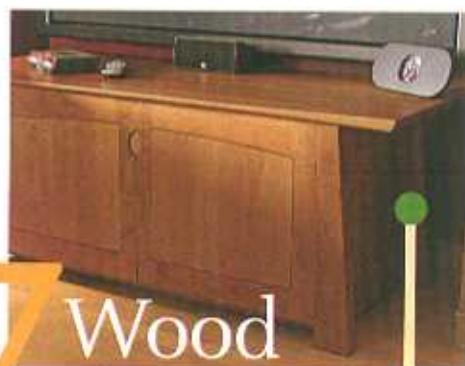


6 Low-VOC wall paint

WHY Every house needs painting at some point, so I see it as an opportunity to use a green product. I specified nontoxic, low-VOC paint by AFM Safecoat throughout the interior. VOC stands for volatile organic compounds, which are toxic gases that can diminish air quality and cause respiratory problems and allergic reactions. AFM Safecoat offers an extensive palette of colors, including deep tones. The paint covers well and leaves a smooth finish.

COST \$12 to \$15 a gallon.

OR TRY BioShield, another company that manufactures low-VOC paints.



7 Wood furniture

WHY I believe in buying wood furniture crafted from domestic trees that have been sustainably harvested according to FSC standards. So for what Sarah calls the “away room,” I selected the Neehi, a cherry media cabinet for flat-screen TVs from Green Design Furniture. All Green Design furniture features a precision-engineered joinery system that requires no glue or nails for assembly.

COST \$4,000 to \$7,000, depending on size and door configuration.

OR TRY A comparably priced media cabinet from Thos. Moser Cabinetmakers. Moser furniture is made from black cherry harvested from a sustainable bequest from the Allegheny Plateau of Pennsylvania.

5 Wool carpeting

WHY More than 200 chemicals are used in the manufacture of most synthetic carpets, so we installed pure-wool carpet on the second floor, with the exception of the bathrooms and laundry room.

I chose Couture by Sutton, a division of Shaw Floors. Wool is naturally stain and flame resistant, due to the oils in sheep's wool: it's durable, resilient, and contains no chemical additives. Natural wool carpet can last 50 years or more, and it's biodegradable.

COST \$35 to \$100 a square yard, installed over jute padding.

OR TRY Pure-wool carpeting from Green Building Supply or EcoByDesign.com.

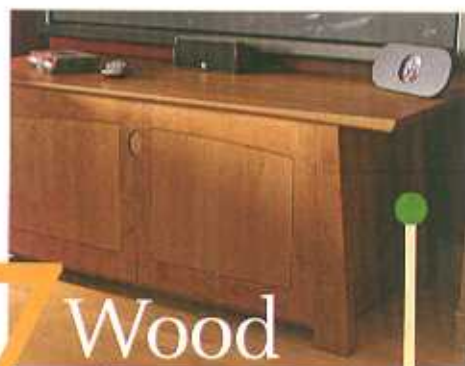


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8 Skylights

WHY Nothing transforms a space like natural light and fresh air, both of which a skylight can provide. It can improve air quality and help lower energy bills.

We used Velux skylights in the bathrooms: in the room over the garage, Sarah specified a 20- by 20-foot skylight from Wasco's Architectural Series. Wasco's motorized SkyWindow has a high-speed motor with thermostatic controls and a rain sensor that closes the unit automatically in inclement weather. It will also automatically help circulate cool, fresh air and allow trapped heated air to escape. The result is a home with improved air quality and decreased energy bills.

COST Starting at \$450 for an average-size motorized skylight.

OR TRY Solatube, an alternative to cutting a large hole in your roof. For a Solatube, a small circular dome is installed in the roof, and a tube is run from the dome to the desired room—even through attic spaces—to bring in natural light.



9 Veneer trim

WHY Instead of getting a few hundred square feet of solid material from a tree, you might get several thousand square feet with wood veneer. I chose veneer

trim from the SJ Morse Company for the kitchen and dining room lattice panels and for bookcases throughout the house. The fronts and backs of the boards are FSC-certified veneer, and the core, or substrate under the veneer, is made from an agricultural fiber called wheat-straw board that would otherwise be burned as waste. Wood veneer panels are stable, and they do not tend to warp.

COST \$2.80 to \$12.80 a linear foot, depending on size and finish.

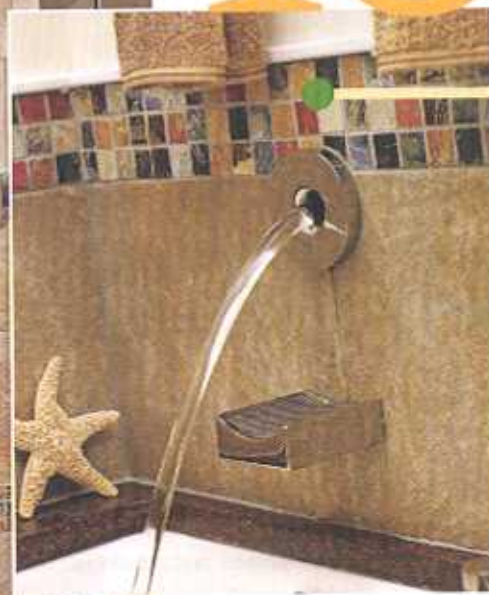
OR TRY Reclaimed or "rediscovered" wood. This is wood that has had a previous life on an old floor, barn, building, or even in wine barrels.

10 Ceramic tile

WHY Made from clay baked at high temperatures, ceramic tile is one of the world's oldest flooring materials. It is generally considered a sustainable material due to its longevity and its inert and odorless composition. Some tile manufacturers use recycled content—light bulbs, bottles, and windshields—in their processes. For the bathrooms, I selected 12-inch tiles in two shades of terra-cotta, and mosaic tiles as a color band, both from Ceramic Tiles of Italy.

COST \$4 to \$30 or more a square foot, plus installation.

OR TRY Glass tile, which has become popular recently, as more and more manufacturers are using recycled glass to produce it.



12

Recycled outdoor furniture

WHY Don't use wood when you can buy patio furniture made of recycled plastic. I selected rocking chairs and tables from By the Yard. The furniture is 97 percent recycled plastic; the rest is color concentrate and a UV inhibitor that makes it sun and fade resistant. Most of the recycled content comes from plastic milk, water, and juice containers. There are six colors and 70 styles to choose from. It weighs about 20 percent more than cedar, so it's not easily blown around, and you can leave it out year-round.

COST \$319 for the chair and \$109 for the table shown.

OR TRY Recycled plastic outdoor furniture from L.L. Bean or Greenhome. 



11

Composite decking

WHY Plastic or composite decking is a recycled product that promises low maintenance and ease of installation. We specified CorrectDeck because it's a solid material made up of 60 percent hardwood "flour," which is the sawdust from furniture manufacturing and flooring mills. The balance

of the material is a blend of virgin and recycled polypropylene—the kind used in postal totes. Altogether, CorrectDeck is made of nearly 80 percent recycled content.

COST Around \$5.50 a square foot.

OR TRY Composite wood decking from other companies, including WeatherBest, CertainTeed, and Trex.

Patricia Gaylor is an interior designer who lives in Little Falls, N.J.

For more, see Resources, page 84.