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# the green light

GOING GREEN IN THE KITCHEN AND BATH IS BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY EASY TASK. BY STEVEN KLEBER



**WITH THE RISING THREAT OF GLOBAL WARMING,** soaring gas prices and concern over the cost and environmental expense of energy consumption, it's no surprise that the green phenomenon is soaring in popularity. With information at the ready on ecologically manufactured building materials, home

products and home décor, modern homeowners are seeing the green light.

To go green in the kitchen and bath, pay special attention to energy efficiency ratings, which make it easy to select the size and performance of appliances and home systems that will fit your needs, save you money and help to protect the environment. Also consider energy-efficient lighting, water conservation products and sustainable materials.

**GUIDING LIGHT** Lighting accounts for nearly 25 percent of the energy budget for an average home. Thus, something as simple as shutting off the lights when you exit a room or converting conventional incandescent light bulbs to energy-efficient fluorescent bulbs can conserve a significant amount of energy. But

if you don't trust yourself to be diligent in this effort, consider installing automatic lighting controls and dimmers throughout the home. For more information, visit your local hardware supplier. Both Lowe's and The Home Depot, for example, have partnered with Energy Star to educate consumers on ways to cut energy costs with innovative lighting solutions.

**TAPPING INTO CONSERVATION** Seventy-five percent of the water entering American homes is used in the bathroom. To help mitigate this factor, install water-conserving fixtures. Low-flush toilets and faucets are readily available through a number of manufacturers. Most eco-friendly residential toilets feature a dual flush technology system with a 1.6-gallon toilet containing dual handles for flushing liquid and solid waste. A dual flush toilet saves 45 percent more water annually than a standard toilet. These advanced fixtures come in a variety of styles to coordinate with any décor and are available from a number of sources, including Vitra, Caroma and American Standard.

Water-efficiency measures can reduce water and sewer costs by up to 30 percent, as well as result in significant savings in energy, chemical and maintenance expenses. Make a difference in home water consumption by carefully reading the label on appliances purchased for your home. When replacing old appliances, make a water-wise choice by focusing attention on the new front-loading washing machines, water-efficient dishwashers and on-demand water heaters.

**MULTITASKING APPLIANCES** The average homeowner spends approximately \$1,900 per year on energy. To reduce this cost, select Energy Star-rated appliances, which use an



average of 10 to 50 percent less energy and water than standard models. These appliances also offer top performance and premium features. In the kitchen, consider the GE Profile refrigerator featuring a GE SmartWater filtration system and ClimateKeeper temperature management system. And the Whirlpool DU1100XTP dishwasher costs less to operate than a single postage stamp.

For more efficient cooking, consider an induction cooktop instead of a standard unit. Induction utilizes electromagnetic energy to heat the cookware atop it, so maximum heating power is released and food is cooked with little or no heat loss. Induction technology

Above: Developed by the United States Green Building Council, LEED for Homes is a voluntary initiative designed to promote sustainable building practices. This home is the third in the nation to obtain LEED Platinum status for a residential structure.

*Image by Terri Glanger.*

Left: Teragren's bamboo products are composed of environmentally safe materials from rapidly renewable Optimum 5.5 Moso bamboo. Shown here are Teragren's Signature Naturals Flat Grain Caramelized Bamboo Flooring and Bamboo Panels in Vertical Grain Caramelized (cabinets).



This landmark Texas home is exceptionally green. Among its eco-friendly features, the home boasts low-flow Delta sinks, low-flow Delta shower faucets and toilets that use rainwater for flushing. *Image by Terri Glanger.*

utilizes 90 percent of the energy demanded by the appliance, compared with only 55 percent efficiency for a gas burner and 65 percent for traditional electric ranges. A variety of manufacturers offer induction.

**TO SOAK OR NOT TO SOAK** A traditional whirlpool bath uses more than 80 gallons of water per experience. In addition, older versions of these popular tubs can harbor bacteria in the jets, which could be harmful to your health. For good reason, this old standby is being replaced in many new homes with a luxurious steambathing system. Steam is also fairly easy to retrofit into an existing bathroom. A Mr.

Steam generator is easily installed in a closet, vanity, basement or heated attic and all control connections are made with plug-and-play technology. The installation of a steam generator in a shower or bath not only greatly reduces water consumption, but it also lowers energy bills from water usage and heating.

**CHOICE MATERIALS** When choosing cabinets, flooring, countertops and home furnishings, be selective about the materials used to craft the products and be informed of the manufacturing processes. Ask questions about composition and research web sites for information pertaining to how wood, fiber, metal and other materials are harvested and produced to make the end product.

For an eco-friendly surfacing material, consider bamboo and stainless. Bamboo is popular as an elegant alternative to wood cabinets, countertops and floors, while stainless steel is sought after for its durability and high level of recycled steel content. Sources for such include Bamboo Hardwoods, Teragren, DuroDesign, Elkay and Lasertron Direct. When selecting surface materials, make sure to look for recycled or reusable material, including reclaimed wood from old mills, barns, river bottoms and swamps.

No matter the scope of your remodel, a good way to begin going green is to simply start small. Even the most minute changes can make a major difference to your monthly budget, not to mention the hefty ecological benefit that will most certainly ensue. And in no time, thinking with an eco-conscious mindset will seem like second nature.

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