

# Green *is* Good Looking. Naturally.

BY JOHN IMES



Fiber-cement siding

Green isn't just for new homes or interior remodeling projects. Green-building techniques and materials can be implemented to not only make your home's exterior look better, but work better for both you and the environment.

When choosing building materials, many things must be taken into account. Budget, personal preferences, health and safety issues and durability are all important factors. No one product is perfect, so it's important to assess your priorities.

In this installment of "Making Green Sense," we'll explore ways to add curb appeal with green-building techniques and natural landscaping. If you're looking to spruce up your home's exterior, there are lots of ways to incorporate environmentally friendly, energy- and resource-efficient materials and design ideas while still meeting your budget. No matter what you ultimately decide to use for your home, you can feel good knowing that you're an educated homeowner who found the best material to fit your needs.

## Installing a new roof

Roofing needs to be attractive, affordable and durable. Multiple issues — such as weather, climate and budget — should be taken into account before you decide on the best roofing material for your needs. Additionally, know if your roofing material is recyclable or has recycled content, if it needs to be shipped a long distance (greater than 500 miles), and if it has a warranty of at least 40 years.

- **Asphalt:** Look for warranties lasting 40 years or longer and at least 25-percent recycled content.
- **Concrete tile:** Made from Portland cement and sand/aggregate to resemble clay tile. Look for product warranties of 50-plus years.
- **Fiber cement:** Made to look like slate or shingles, this material consists of Portland cement with cellulose fiber added for reinforcement and to make it lighter.
- **Metal:** Highly recyclable, reflects the sun, and can replicate the look of wood. Look for powder-coat finishes which emit virtually no volatile organic compounds versus wet-applied finishes.
- **Recycled content:** Can replicate wood shakes or slate with recycled content provided by plastics, cellulose fibers, tires and industrial rubber.
- **Solar shingles:** Integrated photovoltaic roofing materials can protect your house from the weather and generate electricity at the same time.

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Solar shingles



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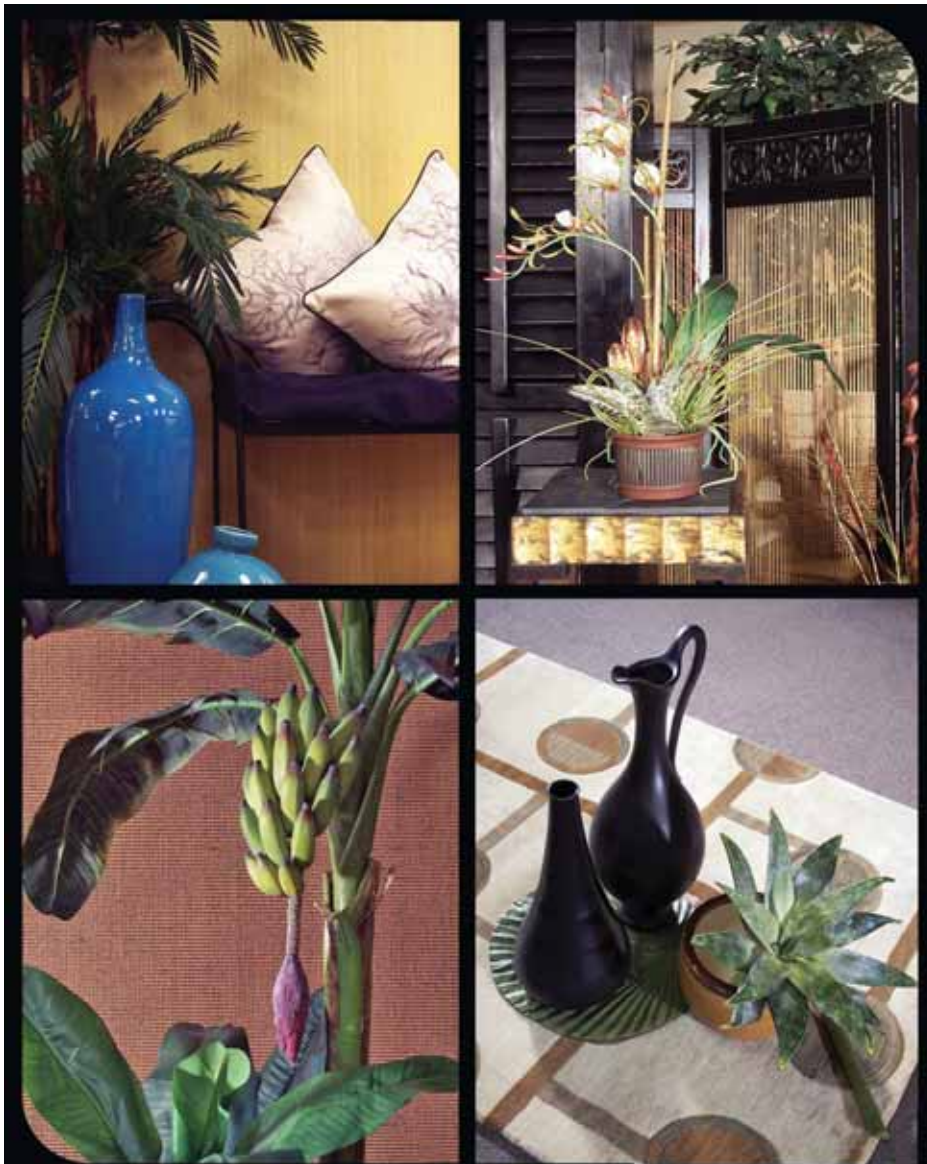
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**Green is Good Looking. Naturally.**

■ **Green roofs and other infrastructure:**

Developers and homeowners are increasingly turning to green roofs, porous pavement, drainage swales and other green infrastructure to minimize, absorb and cleanse stormwater runoff. Defined as basically any roof substantially covered with vegetation, green roofs can retain one or more inches of rainfall, reduce heating and cooling costs up to 50 percent, double a roof's life, and contribute to a quieter, healthier, more sustainable urban environment. Runoff from rooftops can be also be captured by rain barrels or rain gardens specially designed to absorb stormwater. This improves water quality, replenishes groundwater supplies and provides flood control. In short, the use of green infrastructure has far-reaching potential to help homeowners, businesses, cities and counties address stormwater runoff and protect our lakes and streams.



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Green roof

**Re-siding your house**

If you're looking to give your home's exterior a new look, there are many options that are attractive, environmentally friendly and healthy. Look for products that have recycled content, finishes that are factory applied, and a good warranty.

Vinyl, commonly used as siding, can have negative health and environmental effects throughout its manufacture, product life and disposal. Dioxin, one of vinyl's byproducts during manufacturing, is a potent carcinogen. Vinyl is not commonly recycled.

When re-siding your house, you may want to add foam insulation or do air sealing to increase your home's energy efficiency. Consider installing a continuous drainage plane, such as Tyvek or a similar product, behind your new siding to act as a weather/water barrier.

## Siding alternatives

- **Fiber-cement siding** can be formed to look like wood siding. It is generally more durable and not susceptible to pests or fire.
- **Reclaimed wood** is wood reused from buildings that are abandoned or going to be demolished.
- **FSC-certified wood** is from forests that have been grown and harvested in a sustainable fashion.
- **Metal siding** is more durable than wood siding, often contains recycled content, and is resistant to problems such as moisture and insects.
- **Stucco** is made of naturally occurring materials that are widely and abundantly available. To cover stucco repairs, use a highly durable, solvent-free, low-maintenance mineral silicate paint to create a uniform look.
- **Brick or stone** exteriors can be a good option if masonry and stone are locally produced, regionally quarried or if the materials are salvaged.

## Landscaping with natural materials and native plants

The right landscape can increase a home's value by 15 percent, according to the Association of Landscape Contractors of America. In addition to trees, lawn and other plants, your landscape might include features such as decks or patios, walkways, fences and parking areas. By choosing these elements carefully, you can increase your home's curb appeal and protect the environment.

- **Patios, walkways and paths:** Design your walkways to create a safe, durable and environmentally friendly path to



Rain garden

travel. Incorporate salvaged concrete pavers and clay brick from used building materials suppliers and local sources of stone to reduce environmental impacts. Permeable pavers are paving stones or blocks made to fit together so that the pore spaces remain between them. These pore spaces allow rain water to infiltrate the underlying ground, help prevent pollution and reduce erosion.

- **Decks, fences, trellises and arbors:** Look for naturally rot-resistant species such as cedar or recycled Douglas fir. Also choose wood products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which promotes responsible forestry. Recycled plastic or other composite recycled products that mix recycled plastic with sawdust are also a good choice for durability and very low maintenance.
- **Native plantings:** Typical landscaping requires intensive maintenance and large amounts of water and fertilizers, but if you plant native species, your garden will require less maintenance, less water and fewer chemicals. Hardy and adapted to local growing conditions, native plants require less water and are not as vulnerable to pests. Once these plant communities are established, they are also able to prevent weed growth. Native plants also provide important wildlife habitat, especially attracting birds and butterflies.

When seeding your lawn, consider grasses such as fescue and gamma, as well as various 'no-mow' species mixtures that are drought-resistant and require little to no watering to stay green. Using these species can reduce overall water usage by as much as 50 percent and reduce the need for fertilizers, mowing and pesticides.

## Green-it-yourself resources

Research, plan, and then ask your contractor about ways to "green" your next home improvement or landscaping project. Use the Green Built Home™ program and online resources. The Green Built Home Remodeling Checklist has more than 330 ideas to save money, protect our natural resources and improve your family's health, safety and comfort. To learn more about Green Built Home visit [www.greenbuilthome.org](http://www.greenbuilthome.org)

- The California Integrated Waste Management Board operates an online directory of recycled-content products, including building materials such as roofing and siding. [www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RCP](http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/RCP)
- Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. The Web site for the Green Roof Infrastructure Association. [www.greenroofs.net](http://www.greenroofs.net)
- Xero Flor America has more than 35 years of green-roof research and installation experience. Xero Flor green roof systems have been used on thousands of installations worldwide, including the groundbreaking 10.4-acre Ford Motor Company Rouge Plant green roof in Dearborn, Mich. [www.xeroflora.com](http://www.xeroflora.com)
- Keim mineral silicate paints: Great for exterior masonry repair, these paints were originally invented by a German chemist in 1878 and the company has 125 year-old projects that are still in pristine condition with the original coating. [www.keimmineralsystems.com](http://www.keimmineralsystems.com)
- Green landscaping with native plants. [www.epa.gov/greenacres](http://www.epa.gov/greenacres)
- Information on fiber-cement siding from the Portland Cement Association. [www.cement.org/homes/ch\\_bs\\_fibercement.asp](http://www.cement.org/homes/ch_bs_fibercement.asp)
- Wisconsin Power Control provides high-quality renewable energy products and services. [www.wipowercontrol.com](http://www.wipowercontrol.com)
- Earth and Water Works provide water-conserving resources through rain gardens, shoreline buffer development, prairie restoration and green roofs. [www.earthwaterworks.com](http://www.earthwaterworks.com)
- Applied Ecological Services, Inc. is a broad-based ecological consulting, contracting and restoration firm. [www.appliedeco.com](http://www.appliedeco.com)