

Turn the Page

For many, January marks not just the start of a new year, but a chance to make a change for the better. If you don't already have a New Year's resolution in mind, why not commit to making your home's décor more environmentally friendly in 2011? Here's how:



- Ease up on the accessories. So many of us impulse-buy little odds and ends so often that, before we know it, the room's cluttered. Then, when our tastes change, such knick-knacks end up in a landfill. Remember, less is often more. If you need to buy accessories, buy used – garage sales and flea markets are great for finding those little finishing touches. Or buy green alternatives – soy candles instead of petroleum-based paraffin ones, for example.
- Whether you're redoing your walls or breathing new life into an old bookcase, avoid traditional paints, which

are chock full of volatile organic chemicals (VOC) that continue to off-gas even years after application. Instead, use low- or zero-VOC paints, which are getting easier to find and increasing in quality. Or, if you can afford to spend more, try natural paints, which can be identified by ingredient lists that include substances like milk protein (casein), chalk, starch, linseed oil, clay and limestone.

- Choose natural fibers. There's a lot of fabric in your décor, from your rugs to your bedding to your drapes – that's a lot of opportunity to make more eco-friendly buying decisions. Time to replace that threadbare rug in your foyer? Buy one made from wool, sisal or jute. New sheets? Opt for organic cotton or linen instead of a chemically treated "wrinkle-free" set. Drapes? Treat yourself to silk instead of stain-resistant synthetics.
- Look for the Forest Stewardship Council's (FSC) logo, which you'll find on this very newsletter, on just about anything you buy that's made of wood, including your flooring and your furniture. When you see the FSC's logo, you know that the product you're buying is made from wood that's been harvested in a manner that's environmentally, socially and economically responsible. For more information, visit www.fsc.org.
- From time-release sprays to plug-ins, there's been an explosion of decorative air fresheners on the market recently. Unfortunately, most of them are full of chemicals like formaldehyde intended to mask odor, making them terrible for the environment and your health. Neutralize odor with baking soda or vinegar. Give rooms a pleasant scent with essential oils, a homemade potpourri of your favorite flowers, or a simmering pot of cinnamon or lemon slices.
- Like air fresheners, most store-bought cleaning products are loaded with chemicals harmful to both the environment and your body. So, ditch the toxic stuff in 2011. Reach instead for the plant-based, non-aerosol alternatives that are getting easier to find on shelves. Or make your own cleaners using products you probably already have in your cupboards, like lemon juice, salt, vinegar, baking soda, Borax, and olive oil.

