

## SOURCING GREEN MATERIALS FOR YOUR HOME

### Green building materials

- Choose materials that are natural, local and from a renewable source. If you are unable to source locally grown timber or other building materials, due to cost or availability, think about carbon off-set schemes to cover emissions from transit.
- Don't immediately be put off by higher prices for natural materials: sometimes initial higher capital expenditure can be off-set against lower operating costs. You will also cut down on transport and delivery charges if you can source locally grown/produced materials.
- Use recycled timber where possible. If this is not possible or practical, check that timber is locally grown or FSC accredited.
- Try to use durable timber species for external work as this will reduce the need to use so much wood preserver. English oak, sweet chestnut and European larch are good examples of the type of durable timber that can be used for external construction.
- Choose formaldehyde free chipboard and MDF. If this is not possible choose Birch plywood, high density fibreboard or Sterling board which have much lower formaldehyde content.
- Use natural insulation materials as these don't contain harmful chemicals. Natural products may be made from fire-retarded, recycled newspapers or from British sheep's wool.

### Green fixtures, fittings, furnishings and décor

- Buy environmentally-friendly paints that are derived from plant and mineral ingredients. Most manufacturers will be happy to supply you with samples and a comprehensive list of ingredients for their paints. If you want to use a painter or decorator who uses this type of product, search the Association for Environment Conscious Building (AECB) database for contact information: [www.aecb.net](http://www.aecb.net).
- Think about using lime washes instead of paints containing harmful chemicals or that have been produced in a way that harms the environment.
- Where possible, avoid or limit the use of products that contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs). These are emitted as gases from certain solids and liquids and can pollute the indoor and outdoor atmosphere, contribute towards global warming and lead to health problems, especially in people who suffer with breathing problems. Products that contain VOCs include certain paints, wood preservers, cleaning products, cosmetics, furnishings, office equipment such as

printers and copiers and injected damp proof courses. More information about these issues can be obtained from the Environment Agency website:  
[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).

- Reduce synthetic chemical usage and use natural fabrics and furnishings. It is generally believed that the increasing number of allergies and cases of hypersensitivity are caused by an overload of synthetic chemicals. However, some products that are marketed as 'hypoallergenic' may not be the most environmentally-sensitive on the market. You will have to use your judgement when sourcing this type of product. An online catalogue of products that help to relieve allergies is available at [www.healthy-house.co.uk](http://www.healthy-house.co.uk).
- Use wood finishes that are based on natural oils and waxes. These will penetrate the wood and keep it elastic and healthy. They will also repel water and are highly durable. A full range of internal and external wood finishing products is available from the Green Building Store:  
[www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk](http://www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk).
- Choose water efficient WCs, flow regulators for taps on baths and showers or water saving cartridges for taps that save water and energy.

For comprehensive information and advice about sourcing green materials, see *Green Property*, by Catherine Dawson (Kogan Page, £11.99).

© 2010 Catherine Dawson

For more information about Catherine Dawson, visit [www.cedawson.co.uk](http://www.cedawson.co.uk)  
For more information about books by Kogan Page, visit [www.koganpage.com](http://www.koganpage.com)