

Keep heat in the room

Ductwork is exposed in the living space, so energy isn't lost as air travels through the attic or crawl space. That helps allow for a smaller heating and cooling system, and cuts bills.

Leap into green

Plug in some cool bulbs

Recessed lights are LEDs, or light-emitting diodes, which use a fraction of the energy consumed by standard bulbs. They're cool, so they don't add heat during air-conditioning season.



Elkay sink box

LMULUR - israel@charlotteobserver.com

Jennifer Pippin, a home designer, is remodeling this Sherrills Ford home on Lake Norman using sustainable and "green" building and design methods and materials.

Less-volatile paint fumes

Paints are low-VOC, which means they emit fewer volatile organic compounds than standard paints. That improves indoor air quality. Some users complain that low-VOC paints don't cover or wear as well as traditional paints, but manufacturers are making improvements.

Bamboo beneath you
Flooring includes cork, bamboo and Marmoleum, a linoleum product made from linseed oil. All are considered sustainable products.

Paths to energy efficiency getting more down to earth

By ALLEN NORWOOD
Home Editor

With apologies to Kermit, it's getting easier to be "green."

Some owners who want their homes to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly find themselves overwhelmed. Technology is sophisticated. Choices seem infinite, and there are pros and cons for every product or technique touted as green - with loud voices on each side.

But green is a journey, not a destination, the experts say. What's important is that you're on the path, and taking the first step is as easy as clicking on a Web site.

One stumbling block has been that there's no single definition of what a "green" home is. But there's growing consensus on key points. Two new green home certification programs offer guidance, even for owners who won't have their homes certified.

"There is no absolute for green," said Bob Kingery of Southern Energy Management, a consultant and contractor in Morrisville. "There are only shades of green... and they're all good."

Or, if you're still intimidated by the concept of green, call it something else.

"I don't personally use the word 'green' very much, especially in reference to building," said McCayne Miller of the N.C. Sustainable Energy Association. "I prefer 'sustainability.'"

If you'd like to see what others are doing, what green looks like, that's easier than ever.

Miller's association hosts the annual Green Building & Solar Energy Tour. In October, the most recent tour drew more than 2,000 visitors to 125 sites.

The association will host the Green Pavilion at the Southern Spring Home and Garden Show in Charlotte in February.

Windows: Simply buy the best

Windows are Energy Star rated. Experts say, buy the most efficient windows you can afford. Scrimp somewhere else.

Online Extras

Check out a slideshow of the house at WWW.CHARLOTTE.COM