

Go easy on the Earth with a few simple changes



A N D R E W

GAUCHER

EarthEasy

Welcome to our new column!

The Thompson-Okanagan branch of the Cascadia Green Building Council has teamed up with The Okanagan Saturday to bring a "green theme" to the Okanagan Homes section. With informative columns, the council will provide insight into construction with the environment as its priority. Green topics discussed will vary, with viewpoints from an engineer, builder, designer, a European perspective and many more.

So, what is Cascadia? Cascadia is one arm of the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC), representing the regions of Washington state, Oregon and British Columbia.

Within the British Columbia region, the Thompson-Okanagan area represents our local branch.

Cascadia is a not-for-profit association with a focus on envi-

ronmental and sustainable building practices. Cascadia promotes the green building rating system of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) as well as the Living Building Challenge.

Cascadia branches aim to promote sustainability goals in the building and development sectors within their respective regions.

Our local branch holds monthly meetings that are open to the public. We typically enjoy a guest speaker discussing topics on building green. If you are interested in joining Cascadia or simply want to check out one of our events, don't hesitate to contact me for information.

The goal of this column is to introduce and educate our readers on environmental building issues. Because

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we are experiencing tremendous growth in the Valley, Cascadia believes it is important to retain the natural beauty in the Okanagan and incorporate some smart, easy and inexpensive green systems to construction. Fortunately, because there is such a wide spectrum to building green, it can be accomplished in degrees.

Not all green building features have to be extensive — some aspects of environmentally sensitive building can be incorporated into already existing homes. A few easy green aspects include using non-toxic paint, grey-water recycling systems and green flooring.

To get past the common misconception that being environmentally responsible while maintaining a budget is impossible, I will discuss a couple of very simple and economical changes you can do to your home.

The first is using paint without VOCs. VOC stands for volatile organic compound, and most traditional paints incorporate a significant amount of these chemicals. VOCs can have negative implications on a person's health, most importantly upon those with respiratory weakness or illness. Non-VOC paint can be tinted in nearly any colour, so

Being environmentally responsible doesn't have to be done all at once.

design characteristics are not compromised. Many popular brands, such as Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams, carry no- or low-VOC paints and are available at several local paint outlets.

Another simple change is to install healthy flooring. Carpet is a collector of dust and other airborne contaminants, and many traditional carpets have some level of formaldehyde. If you must have carpeting, ensure the carpet underlay is 100 per cent recycled (often less expensive than typical underlay) and your carpet is wool or allergen resistant. The best types of flooring are laminates, tile or pre-finished hardwood. These floorings will not collect any air contaminants, are low in maintenance, and have little to no off-gassing effects.

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