

Make every day Earth Day at your house

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One way Canadians can honour the 20th anniversary of Earth Day in this country is by incorporating its tenets, such as environmental sustainability and responsible consumerism, into their home life every day of the year.

When it comes to green decor, however, it's been a challenge to find items that are both stylish and sustainable. That's changing, says Carole Pare, senior marketing director for Rona, because consumers are demanding great-looking, ecologically responsible choices for home furnishing and renovation materials.

"People want to live more in harmony with the environment, especially in their own homes," says Pare. To meet the demand, Rona is expanding its eco-friendly offering, and will have at least 450 items in place by the end of the year. One of the newest additions is eco-O'gees, the oddly-named MDF moulding line that is manufactured without urea formaldehyde resin and which won't release toxins while being cut or during the life of the product. As part of Rona's in-house line, which Pare says is typically about 10 per cent cheaper than comparable name-brand products, this pre-primed moulding is also affordable, starting at \$12.32 a foot.

Low-VOC paints and formulas made with recycled paint are now widely available at most retailers, and are increasingly affordable. Rona's low-VOC Eco Paint is made from 90 per cent recycled paint, which the company says creates four times less greenhouse gas emissions during manufacture than conventional paint. Three pretty new neutrals — mist, pebble and seashell — were recently added to the paired-down palette of 19 colours. A one-gallon can sells for about \$15.

Green features are also showing up in paint accessories. Last fall, for example, Scotch launched Painter's Masking Tape, made with 30 per cent post-consumer waste recycled fibres. Shur-Line has Eco Brushes with handles made out of bamboo, a renewable resource. Bristles are made from recycled polyester and the metal ferrule from recycled aluminum. Prices start at about \$7. The same company makes rollers out of 100 per cent recycled material. They start at about \$6. Both are available at Home Depot.

Recycled and renewable materials, such as reclaimed lumber and bamboo, have made their mark on hard flooring, but they're also now used in soft flooring. Home Depot has Mohawk area rugs made from recycled pop bottles. An 8- by 10-foot carpet sells for about \$200. It only makes sense to pair an eco-friendly rug with Eco Foam carpet and rug cushion, which is made of recycled cork and resists mould and mildew, reduces noise and keeps floors warmer. A 54- square foot roll sells for about \$46.

Recycled water bottles are also the base of new Bouteille ready-to-wear drapery panels now available at inVu Drapery www.invudraperyco.com. The 50-inch wide by 96-inch long panels come in three soft neutrals and sell for \$199.

Manufacturers are also using new technologies to create hard and soft decor surfaces that contribute to healthier indoor air. Sun Glow, a manufacturer and distributor of custom-made window treatments, recently launched Pure Screen, a window blind product with a special coating that helps clean the air of allergens and toxins such as nicotine, ammonia and formaldehyde. For a more in-depth explanation, go to www.mysunglow.com or call 1-800-668-1728 for retail availability.

Recycled and reclaimed pieces have become hugely important in home decor. That's partly because consumers are tiring of the muted palettes and unembellished lines of contemporary furniture, says Jane Hall (www.janehalldesign.com) who refurbishes vintage pieces in boldly-contrasting, highly-patterned fabrics. "I think people are bored — everything is done according to a formula, and there's such conformity. People are starting to react against that — I hope!"

Working from her Queen Street East storefront, Hall says her reclaimed furniture is doing better than any line she's had in her 30-odd years in the design and decor trade. "Consumers are coming to value things that are older, in part because they have a history and in part because they are so well made," she says, contrasting her sturdy pieces with mass merchant product that's "made from fabric and pressboard."

As concern about the safety and availability of landfill heats up, both consumers and manufacturers are becoming more aware of how housewares are disposed of at the end of their lifespan. That's resulting in products such as PC Home's Eco Corn Starch biodegradable plateware. The finish is similar to melamine, although not as shiny, and it's dishwasher safe in the top rack. While the material is supposed to have an indefinite lifespan, when it does finally go to the dump, it will biodegrade more quickly and safely than petroleum-based plastics. The pieces come in a cheerful cornflower blue or cream, and a set of four small plates sells for about \$8.



Rona Eco Paint is among the low-VOC paints now widely available and increasingly affordable.

If you need more eco-friendly inspiration, you can make your way down (by public transit of course) to the Green Living Show, running Saturday and Sunday at the Direct Energy Centre at Exhibition Place www.greenlivingonline.com.

[You can read Vicky's blog at www.yourhome.ca](http://www.yourhome.ca). Vicky Sanderson's Hot Home Products runs Saturdays in New in Homes & Condos.

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