

# Eco-design your condo concept

Go green with your decorating products

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for Metro Toronto

Whether you want to believe it or not, indoor air is about five times more polluted than outdoor air. Given the fact that most of us spend 90 per cent of our time indoors, it's hard to imagine what kind of damage we are causing to our body by surrounding it with every imaginable toxic building material: furniture, fabric, kitchen cabinetry, wall coverings, etc.

"Going green is not a trend. It's a paradigm shift," says Barbara Nyke of Nikka Design. Nyke is one of many designers and decorators who are following the concept of "eco-design," a generic term that encompasses being environmentally concerned.

"Eco-design, as it's applied to interior decorating, can be defined as choosing products

that are non-toxic or low-toxic in their material composition, have been manufactured to minimize their environmental footprint and that contributes to improving indoor air quality," says Nyke.

Paints, vinyl flooring, MDF (medium-density fibreboard) and chemically-based cleaning products, which contribute to air toxins, all have safe alternatives. They all serve the same functions as the "non-green" products, with the added benefit of improving indoor air quality.

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NIKKA DESIGN

For example, flooring has alternatives like bamboo, carpet tiles and linoleum while nursery furnishings can be replaced with organic cottons, zero-voc paints and natural fibres. "You can use



natural stone, native wood, grasses like bamboo and water to add to the functionality and aesthetic qualities of your home," says Nyke.

Reclaimed or salvaged wood can be used for kitchen counter tops, bath vanity tops, side tables, dining tables, shelving and much more.

"Over time, some natural materials also can take on a weathered or aged look that appeals to some people and can definitely enhance the object over time," Nyke adds.

She also offers some helpful tips on going green. It's as simple as buying local furniture to save overseas trans-



Furniture made of solid wood with no adhesives or toxins is only one example of eco-design, an environmentally concerned design concept that is increasingly becoming popular. Photos by Barbara Nyke.

portation costs.

Also, try to buy furniture made of solid wood or wood that is FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) certified: veneers and press board often

contain formaldehyde, benzene, or xylene that cause respiratory problems.

Finally, purchase furniture made of natural, organic materials that use natural adhe-

sives: make sure to ask the supplier what their products are made with as they are not required to list the materials that they use in the manufacturing process.