



ECOTERIORIS GREENING THE FABRIC OF HOMES

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Staff Writer

Alicia Beath uses a whole palette of colours in her interior design business, Ecoteriors, but her products are all “green.”

“I feel responsible for anything I sell to make sure it is environmentally friendly,” Beath says. “It’s important to test these things.”

Beath carefully examines the benefits of any new product before she offers it to clients. In fact, she spent a number of years doing research before launching her business.

“I had to start from scratch to make my own database of suppliers,” Beath says.

Her goal is to separate products that are “green-washed” from those that truly have a lower environmental impact. Often it becomes a trade-off that she discusses with her clients.

“Environmentally friendly is not black and white,” Beath says.

In choosing products, Beath considers transportation costs, as well as energy used to produce or recycle the product.

While it is possible to have a complete green re-design of a room, Beath says she

tries to convince her clients to reuse existing pieces in a new design.

“When I go into a space, I try to reduce, reuse and recycle and try to keep things that are already there,” Beath says. “It’s unlikely that someone will do a space top to bottom with everything brand new.”

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black and white.”

Often she meets clients who have good quality furniture but they are tired of it and ready to send it to the landfill. A fresh natural fabric on a seat cushion or a new arrangement can reuse existing items rather than manufacturing new ones. Beath uses a local re-upholsterer who uses environmentally friendly foam and fabric.

“I can see it will work when they are just sick of looking at it,” Beath says.

For clients who can’t afford a full re-

model, Beath can give a plan to re-design a room over time according to their budget.

So far her clientele has been mostly young people who are interested in the environment, but she’s also seen families who want to reduce the amount of toxic chemicals and allergens in their house for health benefits.

While recycled products don’t always meet those standards, natural fibers do.

Beath tries to customize a room to the clients’ needs, because there is a trade-off here do.

She recommends Canadian furniture whenever possible because our national standards call for water-based glues, as well as being built to last so they won’t need to be replaced. As well Canadian furniture uses less fuel to transport and therefore emits less greenhouse gases than furniture exported from overseas.

Another reason her clients choose green décor is because of the “cool” factor.

“It’s so in right now to be able to say ‘this is my environmentally friendly sofa,’” Beath says.

Green Décor

The market of green interior decorating items is rapidly growing.

Some examples of products include a countertop – about the same price as marble – but instead a terrazzo made from recycled glass, toilets and sinks.

“The process to recycle is less harmful than to create a new countertop,” Beath says.

Another countertop is made of recycled yogurt containers.

Beath recommends paints with low VOC, which stands for volatile organic compounds. However, low-VOC paints don't have the full range of colours, so darker shades are off limits.

Another product is a carpet tile created by a company whose mission is to be completely sustainable by 2020. The carpet comes in small square tiles that can mix and match colours and are easy to clean. If the homeowner decides to change the tiles again later, the company will recycle them into new flooring products.

There's a wide variety of flooring choices that are better for the environment. For example, cork or bamboo grows rapidly and makes beautiful wood floors with-

out having to cut down large hardwood trees that take generations to grow.

Beath picks fabrics such as natural silks, organic cottons and recycled polyesters for draperies, toss cushions and re-upholstery. She says recycled fabrics have come a long way and are now offered in a wide range of colours and patterns. Recycled fabrics are made from T-shirts and other old fabrics to make a whole new product.

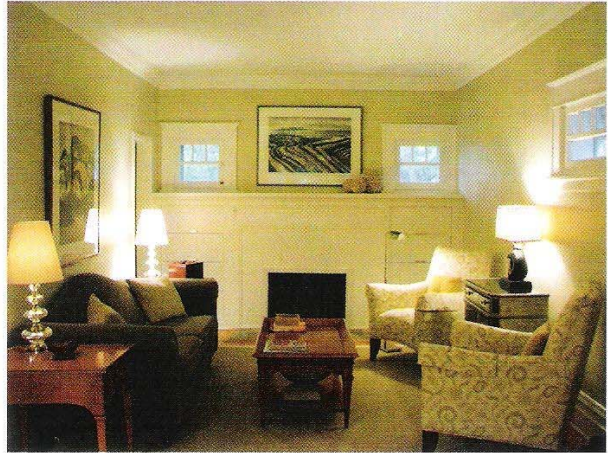
“The carpets and fabrics are not much more than regular fabrics,” Beath says. For the most part, she says the costs for green design are in line with designer name products.

A Bewildering Sea of Choice

Beath says her service is to help clients navigate among all the overload of information and choices, as well as artistic design.

“I know the products inside and out and I know where to go,” Beath says. “Hiring an expert saves money and time over the long run.”

For more information on eco-decorating options, visit www.ecoteriors.ca or call 613-421-7310.



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