

Eco Décor & Green Washing

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Let's talk about Eco Friendly Décor "green" is the direction of every-thing new, but how do you know how green a product or material really is?

Many merchants recognize that "green" is desirable and the customers may pay a little more for "green" products. Often décor items are advertised as green that are not in any way certified or ecofriendly. This practice is known as greenwashing.

Not all Eco or Green products are alike, or even in fact very environmentally helpful. For example a "green" material processed with a toxic finish is not really green.

Materials manufactured in North America and Europe are rated and certified by agencies monitoring methods of harvest and production.

Certification:



For Example the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is the non-profit agency that sets standards for Forestry management for sustainable outcomes, recognized worldwide.

Wood with FSC certification can be traced back to its place of origin and the company manufacturing it is certified to be harvesting responsibly, and working to sustain the forest.

The EcoLogo is one of the most recognize certifications in Canada and the U.S.A. and products are certified for reduced environmental impact on a number of different levels.



The Manufacturing Process:

Canadian and U.S. standards for factory production are more stringent in relation to toxic emissions than products produced in China, so our production is definitely greener, without any additional effort to recycle or reduce energy use.

Some factories use green technology in the production of materials-such as solar energy, recycled materials, waste water recycling etc. These additional measures are taken into consideration in certifying a product green.

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Glues, stains and finish coatings on materials can be made of toxic substances that “**off-gas**” or release toxic vapours in your home for a long time. These vapours are known as VOCs or Volatile Organic Compounds. These are air borne compounds that are most toxic to our systems, especially to people with sensitive respiratory systems.

Progressive manufacturers are using **low VOC** materials. Or are developing materials that have no formaldehyde or toxins in their processing at all. VOC ratings are available on many products and are also part of certification of green materials.

Sustainable:

The use of sustainable materials is another way to be ecofriendly in new construction & renovation.

Sustainable refers to the management of the growth & harvesting of the raw materials, and how quickly & easily they are replenished.

The questions to ask are:

- Is the material **renewable**? & How **quickly**?
- Does the company harvest raw materials in a manner that ensures future re-growth and does it with the least environmental damage in the process?

The materials with the quickest renewal times are **Bamboo** at 5-8 years, and **Cork** –with a time of 9 years.

Hardwood takes much longer and granite or stone takes almost **forever**.

Time to regenerate the material is **not the only criteria** to assess. Some raw materials, while not **renewable**, are in **abundant supply**- i.e. clay and porcelain for tiles & silica for the glass production for the glazing on tiles.

These materials are a good choice over resources in short supply.

For a GTA source of Green Building products go to www.eco-building.ca

Visit the Forest Stewardship Councils' Facebook page.