

Making Your Home Green Now Easier Than Ever

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As with all trends today, the Internet has proved an invaluable asset to the eco-friendly boom of green housing in the United States.

That said, it can be difficult to know how, when and with what remodeling company to start your home improvement on the Green Path. Green enthusiasts, however, will reassure you: greening is here and it's easier than ever.

Their mission: convert everyone - the homeowner, the home improvement contractors and home goods suppliers - to the simple creed of build for yourself and for the environment, given the easy access to online information and supportive local companies.

Along that same line, advocates argue that green living will not rob any more green from the wallet than older construction methods, even proving to be cost-effective in the long run. According to the Green Building Center, of the popular home-improvement website Servicemagic.com, refitting older homes to be more eco-conscious or starting green from the scratch, new forms of remodeling "can save you 30%-50% in annual energy costs over traditional construction."

Web advice like this, on how to take action and bring your abode into the 21st century, ranges from the go-it-alone approach, providing homeowners and their families with the means of updating the homestead, to the search for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)-certified professional remodeler. (LEED is a program of the U.S. Green Building Council, a non-profit business organization whose goal is bringing the U.S. home construction industry up to today's green standards. For more about LEED and the USGBC's mission to champion the green movement in the absence of government-led action, see their website at usgbc.org.)

Faced with the daunting task of a decision, homeowners have several major resources on the web that help focus the possibilities and answer common concerns and everything environmental for the green-savvy.

Blue Egg (blueegg.com) advertises itself as "all things being eco" and it certainly delivers. This is the go-to hub for the interested or active green person, where homeowners can explore all aspects of green living, including, and by no means limited to, environmentally-friendly habits around the house, safe and effective household cleaning and HVAC products, in addition to home improvement. Coupled with a comprehensive selection of "How to Guides" (for example, "How to talk to your HVAC Contractor" or "How to insulate your Water Heater"), Blue Egg offers a directory of green product suppliers and home construction industry.

One referral leads to "Ask a Pro," where Green Home Guide (greenhomeguide.com) enables prospective shoppers to put their questions to a "network of the best and brightest green architects, designers, contractors and consultants across the U.S." In these pioneer days of green building, "Ask a Pro" aims to ensure a level of quality and LEED-accredited professionalism, helping homes with the initial obstacle of finding green builders and the ensuing costs to the consumer and the environment.

In case homeowners would prefer a second opinion, the web-rooted green movement can offer dozens. Home and Garden Television (HGTV, hgtvpro.com) offers suggestions and links to knowledgeable design professionals around the nation, promoting renowned remodeler David Johnston and green building consultant Kim Master's guide, *Green Remodeling: Changing the World One Room at a Time*. An Amazon.com search for similar titles testifies to the fact that there is no shortage to green building literature.

On the other hand, for consumers looking for more human contact with the green movement, look no further than the Falls Church-Fairfax region. Commonwealth Home Remodelers (commonwealthhome.com) emphasizes its Green Design program as "one of the core values of our company and we strive to integrate green design principles into every project we do." Likewise, Ardently Green (ardentlygreen.com), which started up in Sterling last month, provides consumers with remodeling services aimed at lowering energy expenditures and increasing efficiency." Ardently Green promises: "We're with you from start to finish, serving as your whole house consultant and professional installer." Moss Building & Design (mossconstruction.com) has played a similar role in greening Northern Virginia.

Of course, a significant part of greening the home remains the job of the homeowner. Consumers must be conscious of what they buy and how they act; HGTV suggests that, after all, green living best begins "with the simple stuff."

To kick off a do-it-yourself green renovation, Green Home environmental store (greenhome.com) provides homeowners with eco-friendly construction and home materials - low-toxin paints, , while another company of the same name, Green Home organization (greenhome.org), focuses on educating building professionals in the ways of green living.

Armed with local help and the Internet, homeowners today have unprecedented access to answers for the how-to, how much and with whom of green remodeling. In the end, the act of greening the home turns out not to be as difficult or expensive as one might have imagined, thanks to local and online communities dedicated to the gospel of green.