

ECO-FRIENDLY DECORATION

THE THREE R'S OF HOME DECOR



Reduce, reuse, and recycle. You're already well versed in eco-friendly practices around the house. Use the same sustainability sensibility when making your décor choices to create a home that shows you know the other three R's: Resourceful, Responsible and Radiant.

These cellar-to-ceiling decorating tips can help you create beautiful spaces that are as easy on the environment as they are on the eye. Added bonus: you can relieve the strain on your budget, twice. A repurposed item costs little or nothing, and tax incentives are offered for energy efficient renovations and appliances in many parts of the country.

FLOORS: For uncarpeted areas, consider renewable materials like bamboo or cork, and if you decide to go with a hardwood, make sure you've chosen a supplier that uses materials from a Certified Sustainable Forest. Carpeting and underlay can contain toxins so your best bet is modular carpet tiles, which are easy to install and are recyclable at the manufacturer. Floor coverings offer the best of both worlds, with plenty of natural materials to choose from. Look for throws made of wool, sisal, jute, or coconut husks for durability and natural textures, or create your own "rag rug" by tying strips of your favorite fabrics into an unconventional carpet.

WALLS: Bring the outside in with wallpapers made from bamboo or grass. Prefer paint? Traditional products release low level toxic emissions for years after application and safe disposal is difficult, so choose brands with zero or low volatile organic compounds (VOCs), or natural paints made from raw organic ingredients like plant or mineral pigments.

FURNITURE: Forget "shabby" – carefully chosen second hand or antique furniture pieces say "chic." Reusing furniture has twin benefits: it keeps items out of landfills and reduces the need for new manufacture. That prized piece might already be within your four walls. Take a critical look at your existing items; will a new covering or coat of varnish make your old stuff bold? If you decide to buy retail, check for brands that use recycled materials, have low VOCs, and have earned Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.

FIXTURES AND APPLIANCES: Designed to reduce pollutants and use less energy, Energy Star certified appliances are well worth the investment. Low flow and high efficiency toilets and showerheads make a stylish sustainability statement and help cut your energy bills. Heating and cooling your home can be a thing of beauty with an energy-efficient "water wall." Install shapely jars of H₂O on a sunny ledge for a tasteful way to regulate temperature. The water absorbs sunlight, keeping your house cool in the day, and slowly releases the heat after dark.

✓ **EXPERT TIP:** Habitat for Humanity has ReStore outlets across Canada where you can purchase salvaged accessories, materials, fixtures and appliances for your home. Better yet, you can donate your unwanted items in support of this enviro-friendly initiative.

ACCESSORIES: "Buy Local" doesn't just apply to your grocery list. Check the labels on household gadgets. The farther an item travels to get to you, the bigger its footprint. Ask about the source and look for products made with regional materials. Best bet? Support local artisans and buy direct.

ART: Everyone has a unique sense of style, so it makes perfect sense to repurpose your own items. Rescue your favorite photos from dusty albums by framing them, or choose collections for a collage. Why store boxes of sentimental items like your favorite T-shirt or baby clothes when you can use them to stitch a quilt or cover throw pillows? The trick here is to see your familiar items with a new eye. Look for pleasing textures, shapes and fabrics and imagine your stuff out of context – you never know where your creativity might lead.