

# At home, naturally!

Aspiring for an eco-friendly house? Here are a few things to keep in mind

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

The alarming depletion of natural resources has led to a growing call for green methods around the world. While global discussions in this context factor in ecologically sensitive building materials and construction technologies, there is so much that can be done locally, at the individual level, too. For instance, your home. Here are a few ways to ensure that every aspect of your home is organic and eco-friendly.

## Furniture

Furniture is a prominent element of the interiors. So when you buy furniture, it is vital to consider the impact of the material and the manufacturing processes on the environment, too. Furniture made with recycled wood, cultivated wood, cane and natural materials are good green choices. Sustainable furniture is about reducing the demand on natural resources by ensuring that it is environment friendly. “Manufacturers of furniture like us have to be careful, to ensure that the finished products do not damage the environment,” says Anil Mathur, chief operating officer, Godrej Interio. “Measures to be undertaken by furniture makers in support of the environment and society include designing fewer environment burdening products, using eco-friendly materials for packaging/ transportation and recycling/ reusing used furniture and scrap. We ensure all these measures are carried out at our manufacturing units. Using recyclable material in India is not easy. At our facilities, we use chip and particle board—instead of solid wood—in our products. Also, the solid wood we use is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. We use bonded foam instead of virgin foam and where there is no structural demand, recycled boards are used in chairs.”



PHOTO GODREJ INTERIO



PHOTO NITCO TILES

## Flooring

Today, many organic, sustainable flooring options are available. Consumers look for modern interior options that are eco-friendly, elegant and that which provide comfort. “Natural material finishes like wood, stones and marble are modern trends that create the look and feel of traditional homes. Ceramic tiles are all about bold colours and patterns and wood-inspired tiles are the perfect way to be ecologically sensitive. Tile manufacturers are now making tiles that look exactly like all kinds of different stones at more affordable prices and the manufacturing of these tiles is easier on the environment than the quarrying of real stone,” says Ajith Babu, CEO, NITCO. Organic flooring variants include bamboo flooring that is fully non-toxic and formaldehyde-free, with no volatile organic compounds. Even hardwood flooring is going green as it is now being made with wood that has been sustainably harvested. Cork flooring is also an ecologically sensitive option that is moisture-resistant, thermal insulated and made from renewable sources. In fact, using recycled materials like glass and clay and even rubber is trending in flooring.

## Walls

The concept of live walls has been around for a while and if you want to bring home a miniature forest, ‘Moss Tiles’ are one of the best options. The tiles give your walls an eco-friendly look and a fresh ambience to your space. “Moss Tiles are made of a natural preserved lichen and can easily be shaped according to choice. The maintenance required is almost zero. Easy to be installed and leaving a strong, natural impact on the eyes, these tiles can be used at home spaces, wellness areas, hotels, office areas and commercial centres,” says Parushni Aggarwal, owner, Studio Creo. This apart, you can have walls with planters so that you can have plants on your walls as well. This way, you can create your very own green patch right on the walls of your living room! Also, choose paints with a low Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) so that the walls breathe.



PHOTO STUDIO CREO

**Bathrooms**

Bathroom is one area of a house where water consumption is very high. Hence, it is important to choose products that help control its use. Says Rajesh Mehra, director and promoter, Jaquar Group, "Water saving products such as flow restrictors (that control the amount of water that flows to the drain), air showers (that suck air into the water when you shower reducing the quantity of the water used), sensor faucets (that get activated only when it senses your hands) can be used. With such eco-friendly offerings, customers now have a choice to make a smart purchase. These can be fitted in all the interior spaces from homes to malls, workplaces, public places, etc. With the dawn of energy-efficient technology, it is possible to move forward keeping the environment in mind."



PHOTO JAQUAR GROUP



**Kitchens**

Gypsum-based plasterboards in wet area surfaces help regulate water consumption. These are used in the core and surface of ceilings and drywall separations of kitchens and bathrooms. The result is cost-cutting and eco-friendly solutions. So, going organic involves choosing materials that provide innovative solutions to the challenges of growth, energy efficiency and environmental protection. "We, at Gyproc India, aim to further strengthen our India footprint by spearheading our experience and capacity to continuously innovate for eco-friendly solutions as well as to become the reference for sustainable habitat in India. We strive to ensure the environmental impact of a new product is considered at the very beginning of the innovation process," says Venkat Subramanian, regional CEO, Construction Products India and managing director, Gyproc India.



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**Furnishings**

Natural organic cottons are a great choice when it comes to eco-friendly furnishings. From bed linen to clothing and décor, these materials have made their way into our homes. "I believe it is important to have breathable material such as wood and cotton around the home," says Mrinmayee Kundalia, founder and director, TUNI Tales. "Their breathability and natural aura help in maintaining a sense of calm. While choosing furnishings for your home, it is important to find colours that are expressive but at the same time sustainable. It allows you to appreciate the handmade connect by reconnecting you with the ecological surroundings. Organic materials such as fruit and vegetable dyes, wood, stone and cotton coexist with nature and are available in beautiful home decor; all there is left to do is to make that conscious choice of choosing the organic over inorganic. Hence, we have been mentally conditioned to accept these materials both physically and psychologically. This kind of familiarity of the body to these materials, I believe, creates a soothing effect."



PHOTO TUNITALES



PHOTO ANCHORELECTRICALS

**Lighting**

Lighting is an important element of decor, and energy consumption can be controlled by choosing the right kind of lighting solutions. You can make the best use of natural light by having windows in the east so you get a lot of sunlight. For artificial lighting, by far the most energy efficient solution comes from LED lights. These lights not just consume 70 per cent less energy than halogen lights but are durable, too. So even though they are expensive, they are very economical in the long run.

**Plants**

One of the best ways to bring nature home is to grow plants indoors. "Areca palm is a leafy plant that can be grown anywhere in the house in indirect sunlight," Sagar Datta of Casa Interio. "Aloe vera is best kept near a sunny window. Indian basil or tulsi has several medicinal properties and helps in purifying the air and improves air quality. Dracaena is a plant that does not require direct sunlight. You can place it near a sheer curtain or a window and the weeping fig, a leafy plant, helps against emissions from curtains, carpets and furniture. Keep it away from direct cold or hot air from doorways as this also causes the leaves to fall. The snake plant is best suited for bathrooms since it filters out formaldehyde, which is commonly found in personal-care products and is easy to maintain." □