

Going Green

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Our homes and our planet are ailing, and the prescription to get them back to a state of wellness is a strong dose of green.

It has been more than 20 years since scientists and environmentalists told us about a dirty word, pollution, that was eroding our healthy way of life. Experts worried that things would only worsen unless we cleaned up our interior and exterior spaces. Most of the public was in denial except for a handful of eco-watchers who took these dire predictions to heart and started grass-root campaigns for energy-saving, recycling and reducing the use of toxic housing materials. Today the awareness of the hazards ahead has spread as governments beef up their research projects and industry comes up with innovative systems to improve the global quality of life - as well as our homes.

Responsible design is also more common as more and more architects and home-builders are declaring toxic material and energy-guzzling equipment out of bounds.

As for the earthly troubles, scientists are concerned by the galloping rate of climate change brought about by a mixture of gases that trap the sun's heat near the Earth's surface, creating what we now refer to as the greenhouse effect.

Global warming is the virus and it doesn't appear to be cooling

down, considering the past 20 years have been the warmest decades on record and the 20th century holds the record for having the highest temperatures in the last 600 years. Would that we could put all the blame on natural forces for this phenomenon, but much of the change is man-made.

Conspicuous consumption of fuels used in transportation, housing, buildings, industry and everything that runs on energy is affecting the climate.

Coexisting with these planetary concerns is the sick-building syndrome. Modern dwellings have become a stew of chemicals that environmentalists tell us make the air we breathe at home more hazardous to our health than the pollutants outside. Homes are also part of the larger environmental problem with their excessive use of finite fossil fuels and water, putting all our natural resources at risk.

These problems are intertwined and curing them won't be easy.

But a new green attitude has emerged with new techniques, products and technology, which you can read about on Pages D2 - D5.

Saving the planet starts at home.

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Illustration:

• Color Photo: A 2-hour fire in fireplace heats Paul King's house for a day. Color Photo: PHOTOS:PERRY BEATON / Paul King's house