

Africa Geographic, together with leading South African retailer **Pick n Pay**, presents ACT TODAY. CHANGE TOMORROW, a series that speaks to the growing number of consumers who are making – and would like to make more – planet-friendly choices.

greening your home



'We manufacture products that go from cradle to grave. We want to manufacture them from cradle to cradle... It is time for designs that are creative, abundant and intelligent.' These are the words of sustainability architect William McDonough, whose philosophy for a sustainable future includes ecologically intelligent attitudes to all aspects of home-building.

Throughout the house

- Provide insulation in the roof space to reduce heating and cooling bills.
- Install solar heating panels.
- One of the greatest contributors to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the air in your home is a new coat of paint. Regular paint is full of chemicals; instead, use one of the ranges of eco-friendly paints on the market.
- Decorate with recycled items. Furniture that has already been used by someone else uses no additional resources to manufacture, has already discharged the fumes from varnishes or sealants and doesn't contribute to landfill.

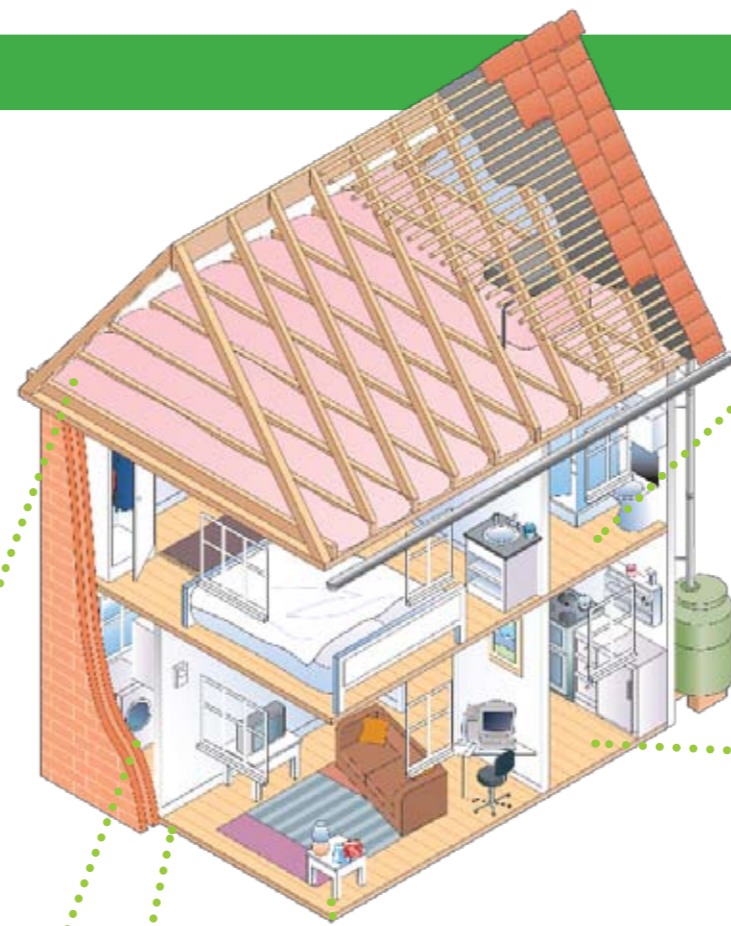
In the laundry

- Set the washing machine on its lowest temperature setting, and use only when you have a full load. Only buy – or use – a tumble dryer if it's an absolute necessity. (Other guidelines for reducing electricity usage were featured on the ACT TODAY. CHANGE TOMORROW pages in the March 2010 issue of *Africa Geographic*.)
- Hang washing outdoors to dry, or use a clothes' horse.
- Use bamboo pegs to hang washing on the line.
- Use Pick n Pay Green Fabric Softener and Liquid Detergent.
- Buy chemical-free microfibre cleaning products, such as a mop and dusters.

Many of us feel that we have little control over our carbon footprint, but it's easy to reflect our care for the environment in the choices we make about our homes. How we furnish them; the appliances we choose; whether we recycle; and if we practise waterwise principles in our gardens are all good examples.

If you're building or improving your home, visit your nearest building centre for advice about techniques and to see the range of eco-friendly products and materials that are available. For example, when selecting materials, consider their origin, both in source and manufacture. Avoid products with hazardous chemical components and those that need toxic products for cleaning, such as dry-clean-only fabrics. And use reclaimed products if you can – choosing recycled windows and antique or second-hand furniture helps to reduce your home's environmental impact.

Here we take a room-by-room view of a home to give you some idea of what simple measures can be taken to implement green principles.



In the bathroom

- Install a low-flow showerhead. It can reduce water consumption by 50–80 per cent.
- Tap aerators also reduce water flow.
- Toilets should be multiflush or dual flush.

In the kitchen

- When equipping your kitchen with bins, buy one or two more for recycling, or invest in a Pick n Pay stainless steel recycling unit. Don't forget to deposit plastic, and used batteries and ink cartridges in the marked recycling bins at selected Pick n Pay stores.
- Equip your kitchen with Pick n Pay's eco-friendly bamboo accessories, including cutting boards, canisters, spatulas and slotted spoons.
- Did you know that it takes three litres of water to produce one litre of bottled water? Instead, invest in a water-filter jug and decant water as you need it.
- Avoid toxic cleaners. Clean with Pick n Pay Green Kitchen Surface Cleaner and Floor and Tile Cleaner.

In the nursery/playroom

- Although not a furnishing, it's worth mentioning that cloth nappies are far kinder to the environment than disposables, which are regarded as 'landfill culprits'. Only use disposable nappies when you're away from home.
- Consider cardboard furniture for children: it's made from recycled materials and is available in funky, modern designs.

In the living room

- Hemp is currently one of the fastest-growing bio-masses; it's durable, mould resistant and easy to clean. Use hemp fabrics for curtaining and furniture coverings.
- Avoid synthetic decorating materials, such as acetate, that may shed toxic fibres.

Flooring

- Use reclaimed products such as wooden parquet blocks.
- Bamboo is a popular choice for flooring. Both eco-friendly and a rapidly renewable resource, it is hard-wearing and allergy free.
- Cork flooring is also eco-friendly. The bark of cork oaks regenerates, leaving the tree unharmed.
- If laying new solid-wood floors, make sure the wood is locally grown, and from Forestry Stewardship Council-approved sustainable sources.
- The glues used to install wooden floors can release harmful VOCs into the air; ask your supplier to use an eco-friendly alternative.
- Carpets made of coir are attractive, durable, sound-damping and made from a waste product of the food industry – coconut husks.

In the garden

- Garden furniture made of recycled plastic is available in attractive designs.
- Recycled plastic is also used in the construction of polywood planks for outdoor decking.
- Plant indigenous species.
- Make your own compost heap with kitchen waste and garden cuttings. (For more information about compost heaps, see these pages in *Africa Geographic*, November 2009.)
- For your braai, use Wonder Bio-Carbon Briquettes, which are derived from the sustainable sources of waste biomass and give off no toxic emissions and minimal smoke. They're available exclusively from Pick n Pay.

Visit the Pick n Pay stands at the **Decorex** design exhibition in Cape Town, where we highlight exciting solutions for mindful green living, with the most climate-smart, sustainable materials and products that are aesthetically pleasing and affordable. **Cape Town International Convention Centre, 23–27 April.**

Some of the information in this article was sourced from *Bending the Curve: Your guide to tackling climate change in South Africa*, edited by Robert Zipplies, *Africa Geographic* 2008. (Available at www.africageographic.com)