

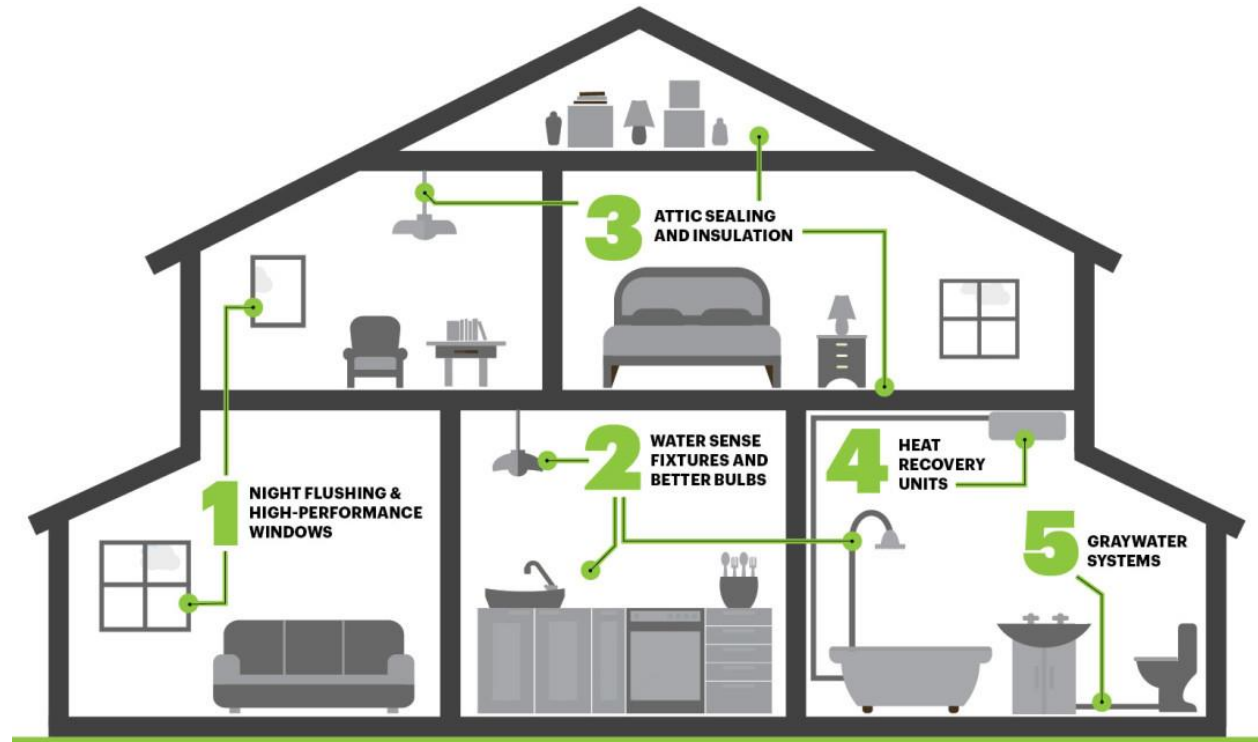
MARCH 2023 | BY ELENA SHROFF



Going Green: How to Transform Your Home Into an Eco-friendly Abode

Abstract

Turning your space into an eco-friendly zone need not be a daunting task. These small steps go a long way in reducing the environmental impact of your home.



Getting Started

Today, sustainable living is the need of the hour and rightly so. The impact of the increasing pollution, depleting natural resources and decreasing green cover on the ecosystem has become evident, and the problems arising from it are now coming to the fore. One way to mitigate this impact is to use resources responsibly. Nowadays, organisations across industries, from fashion and lifestyle to manufacturing and IT, are consciously using sustainable raw material and products.

Architecture and interior design play an equally important role in contributing to sustainable living. With the increasing awareness about going green, there's a growing demand for eco-friendly homes. Here, architects and interior designers play a pivotal role. Traditionally, they would focus on the client's needs in terms of aesthetics, but they now focus on their environmental concerns and blending functionality with aesthetics. They also guide their

clients while choosing the right kind of raw material and products to suit their green needs.



Recycled and eco-friendly interior design

Eco-friendly interior design is all about using sustainable, recycled and upcycled material to reduce the environmental impact of construction while ensuring that the quality of living is not compromised. It involves developing a balance between aesthetics and functionality, along with planning an energy-saving and cost-effective utilisation of space. For example, one could reuse, recycle, upcycle and use local products instead of buying new furniture and adding clutter to their homes for a more functional and efficient approach. It is also easy to amp up the look of furnishings by steering towards a creative approach. DIY, upcycling, origami and craft are few ways to modernise an old item.

Sustainable design is also about understanding the longevity of material that is used. Conscious thought about the nature and durability of raw materials and the method of disposal needs to be embedded in our minds to bring about a positive change. Furniture made from natural and organic materials such as wood and bamboo is sustainable and can be reused or upcycled in a plethora of ways. Rattan, granite and limestone can easily be used to make both indoor and

outdoor furniture. Natural and biodegradable fibres such as wool, cotton or jute are a great alternative to nylon or polyester and can be used for the upholstery.



Minimalism and sustainability

Minimalism is not just a modern and contemporary interior design trend but is another step towards sustainable living. Minimalism involves selecting furnishings that are functional and versatile, reducing the need to buy more which leads to cluttering the space. It also involves using fewer items that you'd regularly require.

Another critical aspect of sustainable living is reducing energy consumption in terms of heating and lighting. Using LED lights instead of fluorescent bulbs is an eco-friendly approach and helps in curbing the emission of greenhouse gases. An exciting and cost-effective approach is choosing the right colour for lights and using reflective surfaces which reduces the need for artificial lighting. Also, ample ambient light makes your space look expansive and uplifts its mood.

Going Green, literally

Sustainability in home décor isn't restricted to material palettes and design-intensive solutions. A little greenery goes a long way in making one's home a

healthier space. Plants are one such handy tool. They not only add to the aesthetics of a room but also act as indoor air purifiers. There are a variety of indoor plants that can bring a space alive with a dash of colour. They are low on maintenance and easily survive in dim-lit rooms as well.



Herbs, succulents and small potted plants can be placed across different rooms – bathroom, kitchen, living room and bedroom. Plants with blooming flowers are a delight for the senses and create a positive aura. Hanging plants can be used in the living room, terraces or balconies for an exquisite look.

Outdoor or terrace gardens is another concept that people can opt for. It allows one to connect with nature and has many therapeutic benefits. Vertical gardens or green walls that occupy an entire wall also have multiple benefits. In addition to enhancing the aesthetics, they keep the environment cool and reduce noise which is an excellent option for corporate offices and residential spaces. Therefore, it is not wrong to say that one can easily achieve sustainability in design without compromising on aesthetics.

I. The Rise Of Eco-Friendly Homes

When you think about a typical house, it is usually made from either stone or brick, powered by electricity and has a roof structured to protect its residents from rain. However, as millennials hit the housing market, the criteria has

begun to change and they are driving the construction of ‘wellness-minded’ buildings.

With solar panels in the roofs and built with environmentally friendly materials, green buildings have become popular not just amongst millennials, but with celebrities too. Orlando Bloom, Prince Charles and Damien Hurst, all have sustainable homes and the number continues to rise.

Let’s take a look at exactly why eco-friendly homes are on the rise.

But First, what is an Eco-friendly Home?

Developed to have a limited effect on the environment, eco-friendly homes are built to be as self-sufficient as possible. Using many natural resources such as light, wind and earth, sustainable homes aim to lower their carbon footprint and significantly reduce the amount of heat and power a homeowner consumes.



Economically insulated by incorporating earthbags, logs, stones, recyclables, bamboo and straw, eco-friendly homes cause significantly less damage to the surrounding environment. Other benefits include:

- Lower maintenance requirements
- Consistent temperature
- Higher quality air (and better health)
- Reduced waste
- Reduced expenses

Why Are They Growing in Popularity?

Sustainability is a word that has been used more frequently over the years with reducing carbon emissions and saving the environment on the top of everyone's agenda. This has caused several homeowners to relocate from traditional bricks-and-mortar houses into different types of accommodation.

Jo and Paul Morton, who live the ultimate 'low impact' lifestyle in a caravan, explain: "Everything we do is based on reducing our carbon footprint as far as possible. Whether bathing in harvested rain water or growing cabbages to preserve as sauerkraut for winter, we plan carefully so we minimise our use of fossil fuels."

Taking to water, a lady who has lived on an eco-friendly narrowboat for six years, commented: "At the moment I recycle everything that I can. I don't have solar panels but if our current weather is likely to be repeated in future summers I would definitely consider it. I also don't really forage for food except the occasional blackberry."

However, the changes in the way we live could mostly be down to 'green' millennials, i.e. those who were born at the beginning of the rise in interest in green attitudes and behaviour. According to a survey conducted by The Guardian, more than two thirds of millennials 'buy as many eco-friendly products as they can' and in a recent survey 66% of global respondents say that they're willing to pay more for products and services which come from companies that are committed to a positive social and environmental impact.

Growing up in an eco-conscious society millennials are clearly more aware of their effect on the environment and are likely to be behind the rise in eco-friendly homes.

What is the Cost Benefit?

Eco-friendly homes can help you save time and money as the materials used are easily accessible. Many builders are able to buy the materials locally, which not only saves time, but also reduces the carbon footprint by minimising the distance they need to be shipped. Furthermore, using recycled materials means a lower upfront cost and construction is often quicker – materials are more likely to be available and nearby.

It is not only cheaper to build a sustainable home, but the cost of day-to-day living is also reduced. Relying on renewable energy lowers operating costs and can end up reducing the monthly bills by up to 20%-30%. Saving this much a month will make a big difference to the home owner financially and there are many more cost benefits that can be explored.



Eco-friendly homes require less maintenance as they are constructed to last a long time. Less money is spent making repairs or applying touch ups because green materials are durable and look new for longer. The buildings' extended lifespan will also lead to a higher property value so if the homeowner decides to sell they would increase their initial investment.

Additionally, there are many tax incentives when buying an eco-friendly home. Barclays Bank has recently launched 'green' home mortgages which reward buyers with a lower mortgage rate on certain deals when you buy an energy efficient home. Other incentives have been put forward, such as VAT dropping to 5% for certain home energy-saving products and some households that use renewable technology to generate electricity don't have to pay income tax on the Feed-in-Tariff (FIT) payments they receive.

The Different Types of Eco-Friendly Homes Available

Not all green buildings are the same and vary due to climatic conditions and environmental issues. Eco-friendly homes differ across the globe and are often built with the new owner's requirements and desires in mind.



The sustainable homes currently available include:

- Tiny builds – usually between 100 and 400 square feet
- Prefabs (prefabricated homes) – manufactured in parts ahead of time and off site
- Passive house – built using rigorous standards for energy efficiency

- Straw bale – straw is used for insulation or as an actual structural component
- Zero carbon – extremely efficient and it has no annual net carbon footprint
- Earthships – constructed with natural and recycled materials, they are completely self-sustaining
- Rammed earth – built from tightly packed soil
- Shipping container – steel cargo containers are used as a structural element

All builds are shaped for their approach to green living and Jeff Whyatt, Managing Director of BWML, says: “BWML have a number of marinas across the UK. The sole ethos for Sawley Marina has been to construct beautiful ethical floating homes that enhance the countryside and deliver a very low carbon footprint, low energy bills and a conscientious lifestyle that is only dreamed of by land dwellers.”

Are Economic Homes the Future?

The Guardian reveals that over the last few year’s campaigners has been asking the Government to guide the country into becoming more aware of societies environmental impact which in turn has led to the ban of plastic bags, microbeads, plastic straws and drink stirrers.

By 2030 the European Commission want to ensure that 55% of all plastic is recycled and results from global business leader in market research IBISWorld (see chart above) shows that public concern over environmental issues has been extrapolated to continue to grow.

This data suggests that interest in economic homes is going continue to rise, and one narrowboat owner believes the increased interest could do wonders for the environment: “I think it is great to strive for eco-friendly homes and boats. I would feel I was contributing towards energy saving as well as it benefitting me personally by keeping my energy costs down”.

In the future it is thought that both home owners and businesses will be looking into green buildings. A new breed of eco-farmhouses has already been introduced in Wales and it is likely that more operations will follow suit. Additionally, with more resources being introduced every day, eco-friendly

homes will become even more accessible at a lower cost; meaning they are likely to continue to rise in popularity.

II. What Features Do Eco-Friendly Homes Have?

A true eco-friendly home features environmentally cautious features within its design, construction, siting, operation and maintenance.



And although there's a ton of ways you can help make your house eco-friendly, the seven most common features include:

- Rainwater storage
- Solar power
- Sustainable building materials
- Food gardens
- Recycling features
- High-efficiency lighting
- Temperature-regulating walls

III. Why Should I Build an Eco-Friendly Home?

Besides being the cool thing to do, there are a number of legit reasons for building a home that will make both you, and the planet, happy. Like:

- You're reducing your carbon footprint. Energy and gas efficiency mean less carbon being sent out into the world. Seeing as 40% of carbon emissions come from the construction industry, taking a sustainable approach to your build can help you not be part of that statistic.
- You'll be saving time and money. We could all use more time and money, especially when building a home. Consider shopping local for materials to reduce fuel costs for shipping and put money back into the local community. You can use a green home kit with prefabricated green building options to save time on your build.
- You're protecting your health. You may be surprised to hear that many homes are built out of materials that aren't on top of the “good for humans” list. If you wouldn't serve yourself unhealthy food for 30 years, why live in an unhealthy house?

Benefits of Building Sustainable or Eco-friendly Homes

A sustainable house is designed and built to minimize its environmental impact and maximize energy efficiency.



There are many benefits to living in a sustainable house, including the following:

- **Lower energy bills:** A sustainable house is designed to use less energy, which can result in lower energy bills for homeowners. Energy-efficient appliances, insulation, and natural lighting can all help to reduce your energy consumption and lower your monthly costs.
- **Improved indoor air quality:** sustainable houses often use materials and building techniques that improve indoor air quality, such as using non-toxic paint and finishes and incorporating ventilation systems. This can lead to a healthier living environment and potentially fewer respiratory issues for residents.
- **Increased comfort:** sustainable houses are often designed to maximize comfort, with features such as passive solar design and natural ventilation to help regulate temperature and airflow. This can create a more comfortable living environment for homeowners.
- **Higher resale value:** As sustainable living becomes more popular, homes designed and built with sustainability may have a higher value. This is because buyers are often willing to pay more for an energy-efficient home with a lower environmental impact.
- **Reduced environmental impact:** Perhaps the most significant benefit of a sustainable house is that it has a lower environmental impact. A sustainable house can help reduce your carbon footprint and contribute by using fewer resources and generating less waste.

IV. Tips on How to Build an Eco-Friendly Home

Living a natural lifestyle brings so many benefits to body, mind, and spirit — and there are so many things we can do to make the shift. Many are simple, small changes that can be done anywhere, such as switching to natural body care and cleaning products, or using reusable bags and water bottles. But once you've made small changes, you'll likely want to expand your green lifestyle to include your home.

Green home building is no longer just a trend. So many more people these days are interested in building an eco-friendly home that 51 percent of builders expect at least 60 percent of their new homes to qualify as green by 2020. Whether you are thinking about remodeling or building new, here are a few things you should know about eco-friendly home building.

WHAT EXACTLY DOES BUILDING AN ECO-FRIENDLY HOME MEAN?

What makes a home environmentally friendly is open to interpretation. Some people believe that simply adding green features (such as solar panels on the roof) is enough to qualify a standard home as green. Others argue that certification through green building programs such as LEED is the only way to be sure a home meets adequate sustainability standards. Regardless of opinion, most people agree that sustainable home building offers numerous advantages to both homeowners and communities.



WHY BUILD GREEN?

Green home house plans and green building features offer the following benefits:

- Environmental stewardship. Building green helps ensure minimal damage to the environment, protecting our air, water and wildlife for future generations.
- Economic advantage. Many sustainable home elements pay for themselves many times over in lowered utility bills. Green homes also sell faster and at a premium compared with conventional homes.
- Improved comfort. Many green features, such as air sealing and insulation, make for a cozier, more comfortable home.

- Aesthetic appeal. Today's home builders and designers can choose from an astonishing selection of sustainable materials and home elements at all price points. Many stand out for their beauty and visual interest, leading to infinite possibilities in design.

10 PRACTICAL WAYS TO BUILD A MORE ECO-FRIENDLY HOME

There are many ways to incorporate eco-friendly elements into a home. Here are some eco-friendly suggestions to get you started.

- Build a smaller home for a smaller eco-footprint.
- Orient your home to take advantage of sun and wind.
- Install energy- and water-efficient appliances.
- Include alternative water sources such as rain barrels and greywater systems.
- Use recycled, renewable and/or locally sourced building materials.
- Install energy-efficient lighting.
- Properly air seal and insulate your home.
- Consider going solar.
- Make sure your ductwork is properly sized and sealed for efficiency.
- Get solar-ready: Build with solar and/or electric vehicles in mind.

Because green homes are rapidly becoming mainstream, building an eco-friendly home has never been easier. Whether you are planning to do the work yourself or hire a contractor, see how green you can go with your next home-building or remodeling project.

V. How Can I Make My Home Eco-Friendly?

Making your home more sustainable can have various benefits, including reducing your environmental impact, lowering your energy bills, and improving your quality of life.

There are many ways you can make your home more sustainable, ranging from simple changes to more significant renovations.

Here are a few ideas to get you started with your sustainable house:

- Use energy-efficient appliances: Replacing your old appliances with newer, energy-efficient models can help you save energy and money. Look for appliances with Energy Star labels indicating that they meet

energy efficiency standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

- Install low-flow water fixtures: Low-flow showerheads and faucets can help reduce water consumption and lower water bills.
- Insulate your home: Adding insulation to your walls, attic, and other areas of your home can help keep your home warm in the winter and cool in the summer, which can reduce your energy consumption and save you money on heating and cooling costs.
- Use energy-efficient light bulbs: Switching to LED light bulbs can help you save energy and reduce energy bills. LED bulbs use up to 80% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and last much longer.



- Plant trees or install shading devices: Planting trees or installing shading devices, such as awnings or window film, can help keep your home cool in the summer and reduce your reliance on air conditioning.
- Use natural light: Using natural light can help you save energy and reduce your reliance on artificial lighting. Consider adding windows or skylights

to your home or keeping curtains and window blinds open during the day to let in natural light.

Whether you are decorating your new house or renovating the old one, window blinds play a crucial role in enhancing the overall appearance of your abode. The demand for wooden blinds has increased in the market as people prefer this material over others. This blind not only blocks excess sunrays and excess heat but also provides a soothing look.

However, to ensure they always look great, you need to clean them perfectly. Now, the question is how to clean the blinds in the best possible manner.

Many prefer to hire professionals who offer the best end of lease cleaning Canberra. They have expertise in cleaning every single spot in a home, including the blinds. Professionals are highly recommended at the end of the lease period as they can help you to get back the bond money. You can also contact them anytime to clean your home. If you want to get the job done on your own, you must have the proper knowledge.

Read on to know more about the best methods for cleaning wooden blinds.



Dusting The Wooden Blinds

The first thing you need to do is to get rid of the dust present on the wooden blinds. Cleaning the slats without removing the dust will create more mess, consume more time, and you will not get the desired result. Follow the steps to remove the dust.

- **Choose the Right Tool:** The first thing you need to do is to choose the right tool. Using any abrasive things can leave scratch marks, so opt for a microfibre duster or even a feather duster.
- **Close the Blinds:** Use the adjusting rod to close your blinds completely. It will help you to focus on one side of your blinds, and the task will become easier and more effective. It is one of the cleaning secrets which only professional cleaner knows.
- **Wipe or Dust Each Individual Slat:** Use the microfibre or feather duster to wipe the blinds from left to right. To get the best result, wipe each slat individually.
- **Rotate the Blinds:** Once you are done, use the adjusting rod to set the blinds in the entire opposite position. Then repeat the cleaning in a similar way.

Washing The Wooden Blinds

Once you have removed the dust properly, it is time to deep clean the slats. Otherwise, you won't be able to remove the stubborn dirt from the surface. If you do not want to cause any damage and want to clean the blinds smoothly, hire trained cleaners who offer end of lease cleaning in Canberra. Otherwise, follow the step mentioned below.

- **Fill a Bucket with Warm Water:** If there is too much dirt on the blinds, you need to deep clean them. So, first, fill the bucket around 2 inches with warm water. Make sure that you do not add any cleaning chemicals.
- **Dip a Piece of Cloth into the Water:** Take a soft cotton rag or a clean sock and dip it into the water. Take it out and wring it properly.
- **Set the Slats in Almost Closed Position:** Use the adjustment rod to almost close the blinds so you can see the maximum area of the slat. It will make the wiping a lot easier.
- **Starting From the Top:** Always start from the top slat to prevent any water dripping. It is one of the quick and safe DIY cleaning hacks. Wipe every single slat properly from left to right.

- **Wipe With a Dry Rag:** Once you are done with cleaning the slats, it is time to remove the moisture. So, take a dry, clean cloth and wipe the blinds properly.
- **Set Slats the Other Way:** After that, adjust the blind in the opposite direction and clean the other side.

What Are The Alternative Methods?

There are also other ways to remove the dust and dirt from the surface of the wooden slats and add shine to the blinds. If you hire professionals who offer reliable end of lease cleaning in Canberra, you will see that they also follow these methods.

- **Use a Vacuum Attachment:** You can also use a soft vacuum attachment to trap all the dust and dirt. It will give you a much better result than a feather duster. Anything other than the soft brush can cause harm.
- **Use Olive Oil and Warm Water:** Mix olive oil and warm water in a bowl. Then, dip a small part of a cloth and wring it properly before wiping every single slat.
- **Use Lemon Oil:** You can also use lemon oil and warm water to wipe the wooden blinds and give them extra shine.

Cleaning wooden blinds is considered a challenging task, but it doesn't have to be like that. Follow the ways mentioned above to get the desired result.

Do not use any store-bought products as they have harmful chemicals. The toxic substances can worsen indoor air quality and can also cause damage to the surface. If you need more help, contact the professionals.

WHAT ARE THE BEST SUSTAINABLE HOUSE PRODUCTS?

Homeowners can use many sustainable house products to reduce their environmental impact and improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

Some of the best sustainable house products include:

- **Energy-efficient appliances:** Energy-efficient appliances, such as Energy Star-certified refrigerators, washing machines, and dishwashers, can help to reduce your energy consumption and lower your energy bills.
- **LED light bulbs:** LED light bulbs use up to 80% less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs and last much longer. They are an

excellent sustainable house product that can help you save energy and money.

- Energy-efficient windows: Energy-efficient windows have special coatings that help to reduce heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer. This can help improve your home's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills.
- Low-flow showerheads: Low-flow showerheads use less water than traditional showerheads, which can help to reduce your water consumption and lower your water bills.
- Solar panels: Solar panels can generate electricity for your home, reducing your reliance on fossil fuels and lowering your energy bills.
- Rainwater harvesting systems: Rainwater harvesting systems allow you to collect and store rainwater in non-potable applications, such as irrigation or toilet flushing. This can help reduce your reliance on municipal water sources and lower your water bills.
- Overall, there are many different sustainable house products.



What are other top sustainable house trends?

Sustainable living is becoming increasingly popular, and as a result, there are many sustainable house trends that homeowners can consider.

Here are a few of the top sustainable house trends:

- Net-zero homes: Net-zero homes are designed to produce as much energy as they consume, typically through renewable energy sources such as solar panels. These homes are designed to be energy-efficient and may also incorporate energy-efficient appliances and other sustainable features.
- Passive solar design: Passive solar method involves using the sun's energy to heat and light a home. This can be achieved through south-facing windows, thermal mass materials, and proper insulation.
- Rainwater harvesting: Rainwater harvesting involves collecting and storing rainwater for use in non-potable applications, such as irrigation or toilet flushing. This can help reduce your reliance on municipal water sources and lower your water bills.
- Green roofs: Green roofs involve covering the roof of a home with plants and soil. Green roofs help to insulate a home, reduce stormwater runoff, and improve air quality.

Overall, homeowners can consider many sustainable house trends, depending on their needs and goals. By incorporating sustainable features into your home, you can create a more energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly living space.

The Final Words

There are many ways you can make your home more sustainable and live a more environmentally-friendly lifestyle.

From reducing your energy consumption to using sustainable products and growing your food, there are many simple and effective ways to impact the environment from the comfort of your home positively.

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