



Large windows bring in the sun, reducing the need for artificial light.

clean room

Putting together an eco-friendly bathroom

WRITTEN BY BILL PARTSCH

Creating a green bathroom entails choosing products that conserve natural resources—particularly water—and curtail air contaminants.

“Water is really the key issue when it comes to green bathroom renovations,” says Ashley Katz, communications coordinator for the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). “Installing a low-flow toilet can make a significant impact on the water usage in your home.”

Faucets and showerheads are also prime targets for reducing water usage. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, these three outlets combine for more than 60 percent of indoor household water usage.

Finding the most efficient toilets and bath faucets has gotten easier, thanks to the EPA’s WaterSense program, which does for plumbing what Energy Star, another EPA enterprise, has done for appliances, lightbulbs and windows. That is, the agency now tests faucets and toilets and certifies the most efficient models.

WaterSense standards exceed legal requirements, which limit toilets to no more than 1.6 gallons per flush and faucets and showerheads to a flow rate of no more than 2.5 gallons per minute. To obtain the WaterSense blessing, a



must-have

Already popular for task and accent duties, efficient LEDs are the green lighting source of the future.

C. Crane Vivid Plus 1.84-watt LED bulb. \$30. 800-522-8863; ccrane.com.



PHOTOGRAPH: KEN GUTMAKER



WISH LIST: GREEN BATHROOM



The EPA's WaterSense program certifies faucets with a maximum flow rate of 1.5 gallons per minute—a full gallon less than the legal requirement. Moen's Rothbury, shown here, is WaterSense certified. \$347 in chrome.

toilet must average no more than 1.3 gallons per flush, and a faucet has to run at a maximum of 1.5 gallons per minute. (The EPA anticipates a WaterSense showerhead benchmark somewhere between 1.5 and 2 gallons per minute, but as of press time, the agency has not yet finalized its showerhead certification program.)

Many WaterSense-approved toilets are dual-flush models. Such fixtures offer a choice of a full 1.6 gallons for solid waste or a so-called half flush of a little less than a gallon for liquids.

Some consumers feel low-flow fixtures and faucets just don't cut it when it comes to performance. That may have been true in 1994, when the current standards first went into effect. Fifteen years of engineering, however, have brought about low-flow toilets that flush waste away effectively and faucets and showerheads that produce the sensation of a deluge consumers so desire.

1/3 Square
Bottom/Left
Bleeds Two Sides
Ad Size 5.25" x 5.5625"
(including Bleed & Ad Rule)
Non Bleed 4.875" x 4.875"



must-have

Ideally, materials should be recycled or recyclable, like this surfacing made from recycled glass.

IceStone composite surfacing, \$75 per square foot. 718-624-4900. icestone.biz





WISH LIST: GREEN BATHROOM

Much of the energy used in the bathroom goes to heating shower water, but another important area where consumers can cut back on electricity is lighting. Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) undoubtedly use less energy than incandescents, and replacing old bulbs with CFLs will surely save on utility bills. But the quality of light can be harsh, and each CFL contains a trace amount of mercury. "If a CFL goes out, you can't just throw it in the garbage or a recycling container," says David Linzer of Designs by David L., Coral Springs, Florida.

The light source that's easiest on utility bills is the sun. Adding windows and skylights not only makes the space more aesthetically satisfying, it reduces the need for artificial light. Windows should be appropriate to the climate—letting in solar heat in cooler parts of the country, keeping it out in warmer areas.

Choosing the right floors and countertops can both conserve resources and improve indoor air quality. "Granite isn't green because of the energy it takes to quarry it, fabricate it and ship it," Linzer says. Ceramic tile, too, requires a lot of energy to make and transport. Tiles made from porcelain, glass or recycled ceramics are better options.

Some recycled glass, in fact, finds its way into composite surfaces that

are alternatives to natural stone. One manufacturer, IceStone, offers, among its many options, a cobalt surface made from ground-up Skyy vodka bottles.

Chemicals used in parts of the bath can off-gas volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, that can be health hazards. Consumers should look for low- or no-VOC versions of paint, grout, caulking, adhesives and sealers.

Controlling humidity through ventilation, a critical consideration in any bathroom, is perhaps even more crucial to a green bath. "You want to make sure the environment reduces mold so that the bathroom will be around for a long time without any problems," Katz says. Another way to cut down on mold is to install moisture-proof backer board. "There's a difference between moisture-resistant drywall and a backer board made of concrete and fiberglass, which won't absorb any moisture," Linzer says. "The backer boards are essentially indestructible."

Because the whole eco-friendly trend is still fairly new, going green can add a premium to the price of a bath remodel. This should change in the future, according to Katz. "The demand for green products is increasing," she says. "Prices will go down, and the technology will be even more innovative." ♦

1/3 Vertical
Left

Bleeds Three Sides
Ad Size 3" x 11.0625"
(including Bleed & Ad Rule)
Non Bleed 2.375" x 10.25"

must-have

Dual-flush toilets use less water for liquid-only waste. They average less than a gallon per flush.

Caroma Bondi: \$339 in white; \$469 in Biscuit.
800-605-4218; caromausa.com.

