



## How To Create A Greener, Healthier Home

*From the design itself to the products you use, two experts share their tips for creating healthy green homes.*

Andrew Stern  
09/19/2017

No matter what industry you look at, consumers today are looking for ways to live healthier, more environmentally friendly lifestyles. But it doesn't have to stop with clean eating and composting, as there are now more ways than ever before to make sure the very place you call home is green, healthy and sustainable.

Pieter Sundgren, a sustainable green home professional with Seattle-based [Greenhome Solutions](#), says the first step when converting an older home to something greener is to work with the right supplier.

“An actual green supplier is the place to start when you want a healthier home,” said Sundgren. “You don't start at Home Depot or a big box national store and say we want to do this ‘green.’”

People assume it is more expensive, but if you want to do it right and know you are getting the best products, it is essential to work with actual healthy home experts.”

According to Sundgren, the reason for this is that there is a current epidemic of what he calls “greenwashing” in the industry; essentially companies claiming their products are healthy and green with no verification that the ingredients are actually up to par with current standards.

“You are looking for third party verification on the label,” said Sundgren. “People are saying products are better, but they are just putting more bad stuff in there that we know nothing about.”

So, how do you make sure you don’t get fooled by misleading information? Sundgren believes it all comes down to homeowners putting in the time to research what they put in their homes.

“Education, education, education,” said Sundgren. “We have people that come in and were told by big national companies that their products are sustainable and healthy but it’s just not true. And as the product starts to break down in your home, it starts to affect your air quality.”

And though it may be overwhelming going through an older home to find everything that should be replaced, he also says that there are a few good pieces to start with that can make a huge difference.

“There are a few things that are easy to do and make a world of difference,” said Sundgren. “Flooring is the big one- immediately rip out that old carpet and vinyl. Then replace paint coatings and adhesives and take care of the cabinetry. Small changes and the right products can make a big difference.”

Beyond ensuring the products in your home are up to green standards, there are also things you can do with the actual design and structure of the home to make it more energy efficient and healthy. Jordan Goldman, Engineering Principal with [ZeroEnergy Design](#) in Boston, says to focus on what he calls a high performance home: a house that is energy efficient and has a healthy indoor environment with non-toxic materials, good indoor air quality and ventilation and is conservative in water use.

“People mostly think of a ‘green’ home being all about saving money on energy costs,” said Goldman. “But energy efficiency also contributes to a healthy home. Temperature swings stress the body, so try to make sure your home has no cold spots, or what we call temperature equilibrium.”

Though ZeroEnergy Design works mostly on new builds where it is easier to create a layout designed to reduce cold spots, Goldman says there are things an existing homeowner can do as well.

“Energy audit services exist throughout the country that survey around your house to figure out what can be done without breaking the budget,” said Goldman. “On an existing home, we always advise taking advantage of whatever opportunity exists; if you are already redoing your

siding, add more insulation. If you are planning to change out windows, go triple pane.”

While the experts admit making your home truly green and healthy can take a bit of time and money, Goldman also has some simple advice on where to start.

“Change your furnace filter, please,” said Goldman. “People are just terrible at it, but it’s the first and best thing you can do.”