Lean & Clean

A LITTLE HELP FROM THE SUN, ECO-FRIENDLY SUDS AND MORE

Each issue we ask a pair of experts questions about sustainability at home. For our first column we're joined by ***Marc Clejan,*** *co-founder of GreenLogic Energy, a Southampton-based alternative energy company that provides renewable energy solutions, and* ***Sarah Beatty,*** *founder of Green Depot, which specializes in green building supplies and eco-friendly home products with locations in Manhattan, Brooklyn and distribution centers in Mattituck and Farmingdale.*

I'm interested in installing solar panels on our roof, but brokers tell me that my resale value will be affected. What's your take?

Marc Clejan: Locally, we don't have enough data to know the exact impact; however, there have been some very comprehensive studies done nationwide that indicate solar-equipped homes have higher resale values than non-solar homes—and sell faster! Statistics indicate that, on average, a $2,000 decrease in annual energy costs can result in a $40,000 increase in property value. Our company is working with many local builders to incorporate renewable energy (solar electric, solar thermal, geothermal and even wind) into their newest projects, knowing these elements will make their homes much more marketable.

I'm not in a financial position to make major changes in my home, but I'd like to reduce the impact of my day-to-day home-keeping routine. Where do I start?

Sarah Beatty: There are three easy steps. First, replace household cleaners containing chemical solvents with natural, nontoxic cleaning formulas. Use dry microfiber and reusable cotton clothes instead of paper towels. Doing this will improve the indoor air quality of your home and conserve water and household expenses. Secondly, be proactive in managing water use. Try installing low-flow filters on your showerhead and a dual cartridge filter on your kitchen sink. Lastly, get creative and establish a system of well-placed fans throughout your home instead of relying completely on central air. This promotes healthy, comfortable air exchange throughout your home and reduces energy bills.

Green Theme | To reduce waste, Green Depot cleaning products (TOP RIGHT)—or your own empty containers—can be replenished with eco-friendly formulas at the store's filling station (BOTTOM). Solar panels, installed by GreenLogic Energy, can be customized to suit a traditional saltbox (TOP) or more contemporary home (MIDDLE). *See Resources.*

I've been hearing a lot about geothermal heating and cooling systems—explain! How does this work?

MC: It's simpler than it sounds. The ground/well water under our homes maintains a fairly constant 55-degree temperature year round. A geothermal system extracts heat from the ground water. Each time one gallon of 55-degree ground water passes through a geothermal system, it extracts five degrees of heat and then discharges 50-degree water back into the ground. On the cooling side, the opposite happens: the geothermal system takes the 55-degree ground water and adds five degrees of heat to it and discharges 60-degree water into the ground. The best way to think of this is that a traditional heating system produces heat by combusting oil or gas. By contrast, a geothermal system transfers existing heat from the ground into and out of your home.

I'm thinking about repainting my interiors with low- or no-VOC paint. Is there a major price difference between the two?

SB: The price difference between traditional and zero-VOC paint is minimal. Here's the bottom line: The smelly volatile organic compounds found in traditional paints aren't good for human health. Who wants a house that off-gasses? Luckily, there is a wide variety of high-quality low- and zero-VOC paint including Ivy Coatings, Yolo and AFM Safecoat. If you ever choose to sell your home, the fact that it has been renovated with nontoxic finishes will be a selling point.

We welcome reader questions. Email the editor of Green Living at green@candgpublications.com.

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