

This Old House

OCTOBER 2007

Our pros
tackle your
top how-to
questions

P. 112

SPECIAL ISSUE

- **Save Money**
- **Save Energy**
- **Build Smart**

53 pages of products & projects
for a safer, healthier home

Plus:

Bachelor Pad Kitchen (P. 29)

10 Best Hand Tools (P. 71)

Install a Dishwasher (P. 81)

Revive Woodwork (P. 77)

Gingerbread Trim (P. 112)

New Uses for Old Stained Glass (P. 55)

THISOLDHOUSE
AOL KEYWORD: THIS OLD H

\$4.99US \$5.99CAN



0 70989 10160 9



Building Green

» What you need to know to make smarter, healthier choices for the floor under your feet, the roof over your head, and everything in between

BY KEITH PANDOLFI
PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES WORRELL

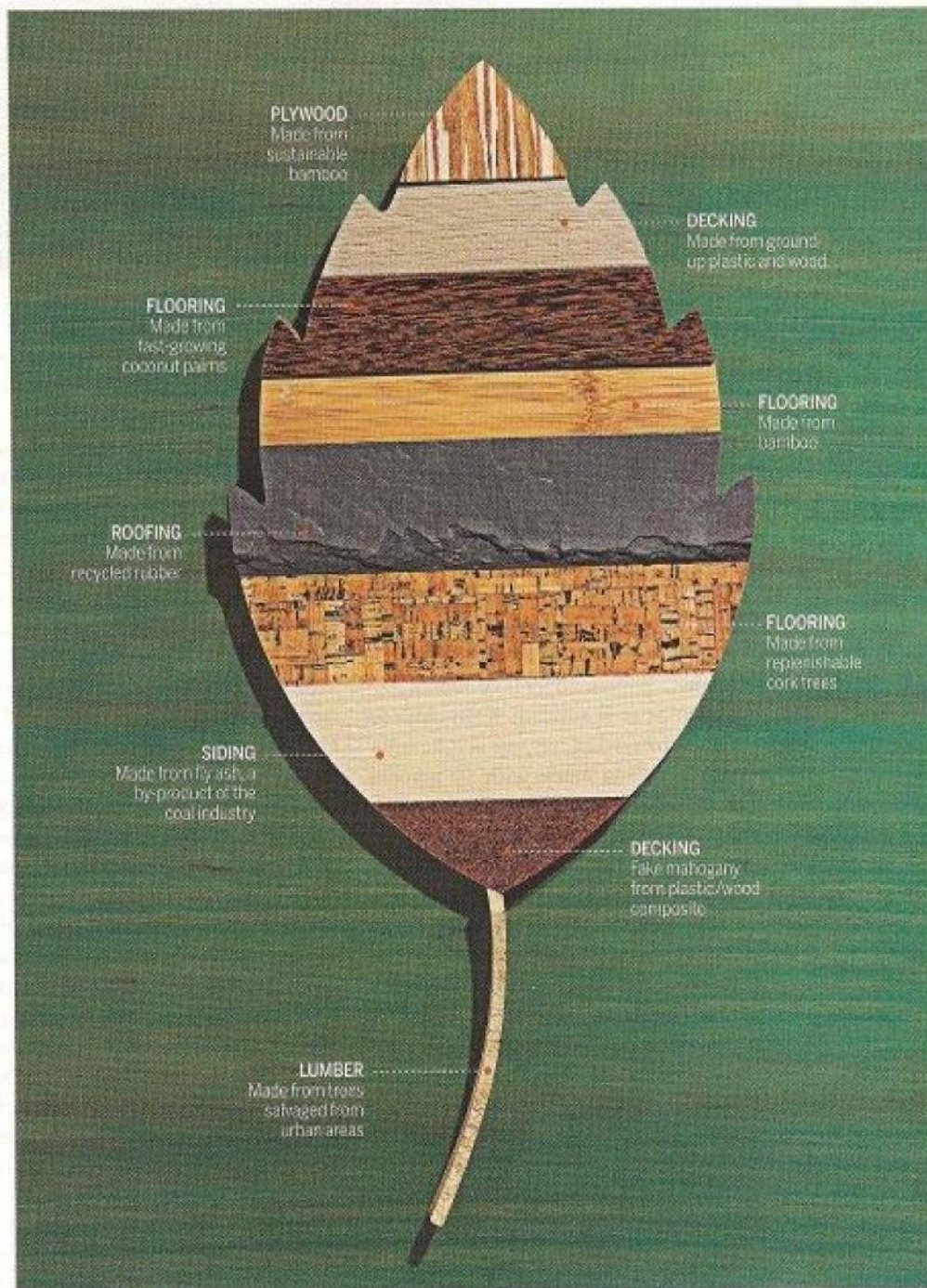
IN THE MARKET FOR A NEW ROOF? How about a deck? Painting the baby's nursery? Or are you finally replacing the carpet in that smoking den turned workout room? No matter what the project, it's never a bad idea to use products you can feel good about—ones that aren't a risk to your family's health, your home's air quality, or our dwindling natural resources.

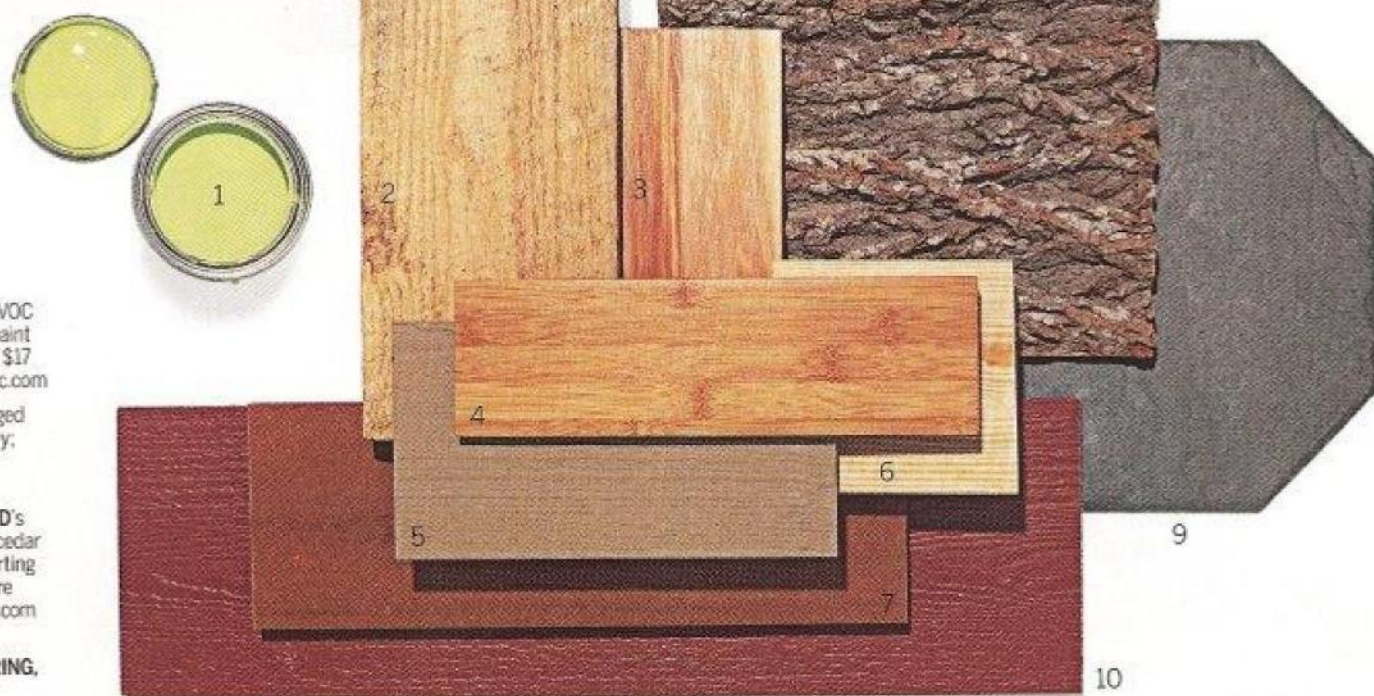
Even mainstream building centers are stocked to the rafters these days with products touting their "green" credentials. But it can be hard to know which ones live up to the claims. To help you make better buying decisions, we'll tell you the key things to look for on those paint cans, lumber bundles, and roofing tiles, whether you're shopping for conventional building materials or their eco-friendly alternatives.

PAINT

THE PROBLEM Paint manufacturers used to rely on lead as a base, mercury as a mildew inhibitor, and a heaping helping of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) to bind their products together. Thankfully, those days are over—almost. Today's water-based latexes forgo the lead and mercury but still contain VOCs that offgas for months. They've been blamed for maladies from skin irritations to serious respiratory problems, especially in folks who are chemically sensitive.

THE GREEN SOLUTION Most paint manufacturers now offer low- or no-VOC versions of their products at around the same price as their conventional formulas. To qualify, EPA rules dictate that the paint can contain no more than 250 grams of VOCs per liter. Green Seal, a nonprofit organization that tests and certifies products, goes even further,





1. **OLYMPIC** zero-VOC interior flat latex paint in "yellow lettuce," \$17 per gallon; olympic.com

2. **CITILOG** salvaged lumber, prices vary; citilog.com

3. **SELKIRK SPECIALTY WOOD**'s clear-edge glued cedar fascia boards, starting at \$1.55 per square foot; selkirkcedar.com

4. **CALIFORNIA BAMBOO FLOORING**, starting at \$2 per square foot; zenbambooflooring.com

5. **TEMPLE-INLAND**'s TrimCraft recycled wood-fiber trim, starting at \$1.50 per square foot; temple.com

6. **TIMBERSIL**'s sodium-silicate wood decking, starting at \$3.50 per square foot; timbersilwood.com

7. **TREX** composite wood decking, about \$5 per square foot; trex.com

8. **HIGHLAND CRAFTSMEN**'s bark siding, starting at \$6.25 per square foot; highlandcraftsmen.com

9. **ECOSTAR**'s recycled rubber tiles, \$5-\$6 per square foot; ecostarinc.com

10. **CERTAINTED**'s ColorMax fiber-cement siding, starting at \$1.30 per square foot; certainteed.com

limiting VOCs to between 50 and 100 grams per liter, depending on the type of paint—that's real progress when you consider that our old oil-based paints carried around 800 grams per liter. If you suffer from chemical sensitivities, your best bets are virtually fume-free, zero-VOC paints, including all-natural milk and clay paints.

PRODUCTS Companies such as Benjamin Moore, Glidden, Olympic, and Rodda offer low- or no-VOC versions of their paints, several of which are Green Seal-approved. Kelly Moore Paints offers E-Coat, an acrylic low-VOC coating made with 50 percent postconsumer recycled paint, for an affordable \$7.50 per gallon.

WOOD FLOORS AND TRIM

THE PROBLEM We all know about the damage inflicted on forests and on the woodland creatures who love them by clear-cutting and unsustainable forestry practices. But deforestation also contributes to air pollution, as carbon dioxide that would otherwise be absorbed by trees stays in the atmosphere. In fact, the destruction of forests worldwide keeps as much CO₂ in the atmosphere as is emitted annually by all the cars, trucks, and power plants in the U.S., says Annie Petsonk of the

Environmental Defense Fund.

THE GREEN SOLUTION Look for products certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, an independent nonprofit made up of forestry professionals who evaluate and certify sustainably harvested wood products. You can also buy flooring and trim milled from reclaimed lumber, or logs salvaged from the bottoms of lakes and rivers. Other good sustainable choices are bamboo, palm, and eucalyptus, all of which grow fast and are easy to replenish. No matter what material you choose, try to heed *This Old House* master carpenter Norm Abram's maxim to "measure twice, cut once"—that way, you won't waste any.

PRODUCTS FSC-certified wood is widely available at Home Depot and Lowe's. In an interesting twist on reclamation, CitiLog gathers felled trees and trimmed tree limbs from urban areas and sends them off to Amish country to be custom-milled into trim, floorboards, and siding. Smith & Fong manufactures Plyboo bamboo and Durapalm, both of which can be used as paneling, trim, and flooring, as can Weyerhaeuser's Lyptus, a Brazilian eucalyptus hybrid.

SIDING

THE PROBLEM Solid wood siding is beautiful and long-lasting. But it takes

a lot of wood to cover a house, and the best materials—cedar, for example—come from old-growth forests.

THE GREEN SOLUTION If only wood will do, seek out FSC-certified products (see above), or siding milled from reclaimed lumber. If you're happy with something that only looks like wood, try ground-up recycled wood fiberboard, or fiber-cement siding made with recovered fly ash, a by-product of coal burned in power plants.

PRODUCTS Temple-Inland's Endura siding and trim are made with postindustrial and postconsumer wood fiber and are certified by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), a third-party testing and certification service for building products promoting environmental and/or social responsibility. CertainTeed recently changed the formulation of its fiber-cement siding to include recovered fly ash. And North Carolina-based Highland Craftsmen sells rustic-looking poplar siding and shingles made out of discarded bark from trees used for furniture and plywood manufacturing.

DECKING

THE PROBLEM Protecting wood from rot and insects by pressure-treating it with chromated copper arsenate (CCA)