

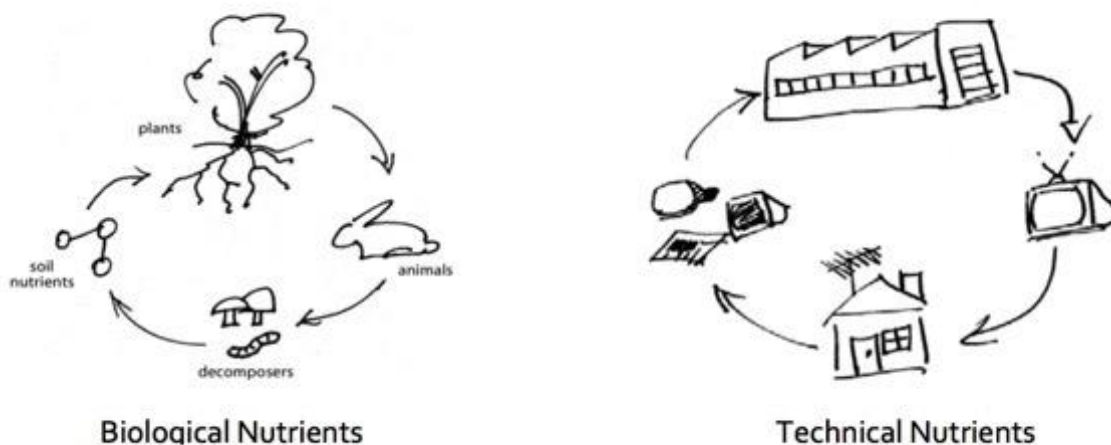
A bark shingle is very first Cradle to Cradle Platinum product



© Bark House

The Cradle to Cradle concept is so seductive, the idea that there is no such thing as waste; you design a product so that every bit of it can be reused as a biological nutrient (you can compost it) or a technical nutrient (you can reuse or truly recycle it).

Figure 1 Depiction of Biological and Technological Nutrient Cycles



Cradle to Cradle/Screen capture

Cradle to Cradle certification runs through a number of levels, from Basic, which we once had serious reservations about, to Platinum, which demanded such levels of perfection that it had never been achieved.

Until now, with [Bark House shingles](#). If you wanted to, you could almost write this up as a parody of the perfect green product:

It's made by Appalachian craftspeople who work for a B corporation, from bark, a waste product peeled off sustainably harvested logs cut for other purposes. Being a wood product, it sequesters carbon for the life of the shingle. Being bark, which evolved to protect trees, it is durable and needs no chemicals or additives, while lasting as long as 80 years. No water is used in the process, and the factory where the happy workers make these shingles mostly by hand is 10% powered by onsite solar. It's not easy to do:

Along with the material's innate sustainability, Bark House has dedicated itself to creating a viable supply chain and expanding its positive impact to other businesses in North Carolina by training loggers in the proper procurement and handling of RAW (Recycled Appalachian Wood Waste) poplar bark. Though the work of peeling back bark is hard, it's also environmentally sound and economically worthwhile—increasing the income of loggers fourfold for a single tree.

At some times, it is almost over the top:

Bark House's work is in keeping with Appalachian culture of quality in craftsmanship and materials from source to shipping; a strong sense of independence; love of nature; sharing with workers, colleagues and community; appreciation of hard work.

1. Eliminate the Concept of Waste

- Nutrients become nutrients again. All materials are seen as potential nutrients in one of two cycles – technical and biological cycles.
- Design materials and products that are effectively “food” for other systems. This means designing materials and products to be used over and over in either technical or biological systems.
- Design materials and products that are safe. Design materials and products whose nutrient management system leaves a beneficial legacy economically, environmentally, and equitably.
- Create and participate in systems to collect and recover the value of these materials and products. This is especially important for the effective management of scarce materials.
- Clean water is vital for humans and all other organisms. Manage influent and effluent water streams responsibly, and consider local impacts of water use to promote healthy watersheds and ecosystems.
- Carbon dioxide (CO₂) should be sequestered in soil. Our current practice where carbon dioxide ends up in the oceans and in the atmosphere is a mismanagement of a material.

2. Use Renewable Energy

- The quality of energy matters. Energy from renewable sources is paramount to effective design.
- Aligning with Green-e's list of eligible sources, renewable energy sources are solar, wind, hydropower, biomass (when not in competition with food supplies), geothermal, and hydrogen fuel cells.

3. Celebrate Diversity

- Use social fairness to guide a company's operations and stakeholder relationships.
- Encourage staff participation in creative design and research projects to enhance your Cradle to Cradle story.
- Technological diversity is key for innovation; explore different options in looking for creative solutions.
- Support local biodiversity to help your local ecosystem flourish; strive to have a beneficial social, cultural, and ecological footprint.

Cradle to Cradle/Screen capture

I was sorely tempted to illustrate this post with images of Bambi in the forest, or seven dwarves singing “hi ho, hi ho”, but in fact, this is a very big deal. The criteria for achieving C2C platinum are incredibly difficult and aspirational. Few people think about their social and cultural footprints as well as their ecological one. Stacy Glass, VP of the Built Environment for the Cradle to Cradle Products Innovation Institute, which does the certification, (and [seen on TreeHugger here](#)) says in a press release:

Bark House's approach to sustainability is certainly rooted in its naturally derived product line, but the company has gone much beyond that, embracing a holistic approach that is the essence of Cradle to Cradle's own philosophies. Achieving an overall Platinum certification requires achieving top marks in all five categories, an accomplishment that truly demonstrates the depth and commitment of the company's efforts to provide safe products that can be perpetually cycled and are manufactured in ways that respect humans

and the environment.

It's hard to be cynical about that. Of course, this will be a very expensive niche product produced in relatively small quantities for high end installations. But it is the first Platinum product, and I hope it will not be the last.

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