

# GO GREEN!

*Naturally beautiful choices are better for the Earth—and your health* ■ BY MELINDA PAGE

WHETHER YOU'RE READY to renovate now or just daydreaming over glossy decorating magazines, you may want to consider going green for your next upgrade. Paint, carpet, flooring, and other materials found in the home often emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs) such as formaldehyde and toluene—which can cause headaches, coughing, nausea, and breathing problems, as well as damage to the environment. But if you buy smart, you can substantially cut down on your exposure and keep the planet safe for your kids, says Gary Ginsberg, PhD, a senior toxicologist at the Con-

necticut Department of Public Health. Fortunately, there are plenty of good-looking, Earth-friendly products available at costs comparable to—and sometimes lower than—traditional choices. So you don't have to choose between making your home look beautiful and making it a friendlier place to live. Here, the latest and greatest in eco-decor:



LOW- OR NO-VOC PAINTS ADD COLOR—WITHOUT THE CHEMICALS, ODORS, AND HEADACHES

## Carpets

That new-carpet smell? Chemicals, some of them toxic, says Ian Greaves, MD, an associate professor of environmental and occupational health at the University of Minnesota.

### ALTERNATIVE:

#### NATURAL FIBER RUGS

Make the air in your home easier to breathe by buying natural fibers instead of synthetic ones. To avoid toxic glues, install wall-to-wall with nails or opt for water-based adhesives.

■ **The Naturals from FLOR** ([florcatalog.com](http://florcatalog.com)) is a line of carpet tiles made from organic cotton, kenaf (similar to hemp), wool, or sisal. The 19.7-by-19.7-inch tiles come in fun patterns and textures and look similar to looped synthetic carpets. At \$5 to \$10 per square foot, they're pricier than conventional carpet tiles (around \$3 per square foot).

■ **Earth Weave's Bio-Flor carpets** ([earthweave.com](http://earthweave.com)) are 100% wool—the luxury carpet fiber. They're backed with jute and chemical free. Plus, they're completely biodegradable. With large, cushiony loops and natural colors, they look and feel like other high-end

looped carpets and cost about the same: \$40 to \$50 per square yard.

## Paint

Latex and oil-based paints contain compounds such as aldehydes—which, like other VOCs, have been linked to headaches and aggravated asthma.

### ALTERNATIVE:

#### LOW-VOC PAINT

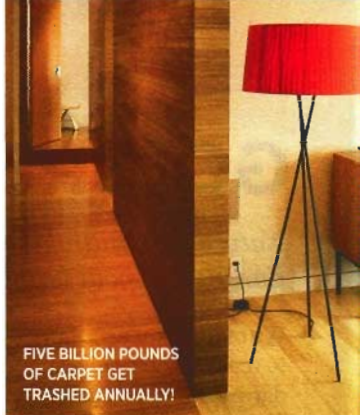
Look for low- or no-VOC paints with the Green Seal ([greenseal.org](http://greenseal.org)).

■ **Benjamin Moore's new Aura line** ([myaurapaint.com](http://myaurapaint.com)) dries fast because it has fewer solvents. At \$55 per gallon, it costs more (paint generally runs from \$20 to \$40 per gallon), but the rich colors cover well, so you'll probably need only one coat.

■ **YOLO Colorhouse's zero-VOC paint** ([yolo.colorhouse.com](http://yolo.colorhouse.com)) comes in 47 nature-inspired shades, including Leaf, Water, and Air; the colors are beautiful. Price: \$39 to \$41 per gallon.

## Flooring

Vinyl flooring is made of polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which has been associated with an increased risk of asthma.



### ALTERNATIVE:

#### CORK OR BAMBOO

Cork flooring is a renewable, chemical-free product made from the bark of the cork oak. Bamboo, another good alternative, is pricier than vinyl but sturdier than red oak or maple, and it's renewable.

■ **Mio's Cork Modutiles** ([mioculture.com](http://mioculture.com)) come in a set of 12 chocolate and tan geometric tiles with nontoxic, self-stick adhesive tabs for DIY installation. Put the money saved on labor toward the \$15-per-square-foot price tag (vinyl typically ranges from \$2 to \$8 per square foot).

■ **EcoTimber's line of bamboo flooring** ([ecotimber.com](http://ecotimber.com)) is available in shades from a light, natural color to a dark amber and costs \$4 to \$7 per square foot. ■



For more eco-decor choices for your home, visit [prevention.com/eco](http://prevention.com/eco).