



Getting Started

January is a time for new beginnings. This year, I'm making a commitment to live a little greener. I've started by making friends with the folks at Kokua Hawaii Foundation. They've offered to share their expertise and advice with Hawaii Home and our readers. Check out this feature monthly for updates and ideas about living a little greener here in Hawaii.

PLANNING A GREEN BUILD OR REMODEL

Think green from the very beginning—plan for it. Team up with an architect, builder or contractor who specializes in sustainable construction. At least 90 in Hawaii can be found at www.usgbc.org, the U.S. Green Building Council's Web site.

Once you find a builder, talk to him about your goals. Consider what environmentally-friendly elements are most important, says Rhonda Goyke, environmental specialist at Green Sand Inc. These include energy efficiency, water savings, good indoor air quality or a combination of many. Shoot to maximize natural resources, such as land, sun, air and water, adds Matt Goyke, architect, of Green Sand Inc., and also Rhonda's husband.

Bring your designers and contractors together for, what Green Sand calls, a holistic, or integrated, design approach. Discuss costs and feasibility, and how everyone can work together. "A house is a complex organism," says Matt. "A clear understanding of the project's goals is critical."

Then, plan to build with recycled or renewable materials. A new company, ReUse Hawaii, deconstructs houses, then resells the good material—reducing waste, production and transportation demands in the process. If ReUse doesn't have it, local materials are the next best bet. Just ask for it, Rhonda says. "More demand could bring [sustainable material] manufacturing to Hawaii."

When I asked why homeowners should go green with a remodel or new build, Matt's answer was quick and simple. "Why not?" he says. Constructing efficient homes saves resources and homeowners' bank accounts in the long run. Plus, green homes aren't just hay bale houses in the wilderness anymore. Rhonda says your green home can look any way you want it to, as long as that's part of your plan.

5 Ideas for Planning a Greener NEW Home:

1. Bring your team together from the beginning.
2. Where you build counts! Choose a location near work and school. Commutes affect your quality of life.
3. How you position your home on the lot is also a factor in being green. Orient the house to maximize natural ventilation and reduce heat from the sun, using a method called passive design.
4. Build with recycled or sustainable materials.
5. Build to control storm-water runoff, with catchments that feed water back into the ground, instead of onto the street.

5 Ideas for a Greening Up an OLDER Home:

1. Add insulation to reduce energy needs.
2. Install a solar water heater. (Cut electricity costs by 40 percent and get those tax credits!)
3. Get a brighter roof. High albedo, or reflectivity, reduces energy needs.
4. Ditch old carpets. They are often made with glues that have urea formaldehyde. Newer ones have better adhesives that don't emit toxins. Better yet, go with hard floors. Carpets can hold mold, which aggravates allergies.
5. Purchase and install a rain water harvesting system. Use the harvested rain to water landscaping and to wash your car.

RESOURCES:

1. U.S. Green Building Council's Web site: www.usgbc.org
2. ReUse Hawaii's Web site: www.reusehawaii.com
3. "Your Green Home: A Guide to Planning a Healthy, Environmentally Friendly New Home," by Alex Wilson
4. "Green Remodeling : Changing the World One Room at a Time," by David Johnston

