

News Release

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Sustainable product choices at your fingertips

There is growing interest in sustainable or "green" products as alternative building materials with proven benefits for the environment and for our health.

"That's important, because we spend upwards of 90 percent of our time indoors in this country," says Sherrie Gruder, LEED Accredited Professional with the U.S. Green Building Council and Sustainable Design Specialist for the University of Wisconsin-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center, "and the quality of the indoor environment affects our health, productivity and sense of well-being."

Building materials also have a huge impact on the environment, Gruder says, using 40 percent of the materials in the global economy and impacting our air, water and land at every stage of their extraction, manufacture and use.

UW-Extension's Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC) is introducing a new tool to help Wisconsin residents identify and find green building products that are both healthy and mindful of the environment. The new *Building Green Guide: Sustainable Product Choices* will inform homeowners and building professionals about sustainable or green building materials.

The *Building Green Guide* lists green building materials, products and services primarily available through Wisconsin retailers and distributors and those in neighboring states. It includes green structural, interior and exterior products for any size project and a range of budgets. It also educates the user about what makes the product a more sustainable choice.

Green building products have a number of unique characteristics. They are low- or non-toxic, are reused and refurbished, and are sustainably harvested. They contain recycled and agricultural materials, and reduce energy, material and water use. Those who manufacture and use green building products are motivated by several goals:

- to minimize the consumption and depletion of resources;
- to minimize the life-cycle impact of materials on the environment; and
- to minimize the impact of materials on indoor environmental quality and human health.

Any project can be done green, from a simple floor replacement to a house remodel or new construction. There are thousands of green, resource efficient building materials available today. This third edition of the *Building Green Guide* has grown from 20 pages in 2002 to more than 100 pages in 2005. The quality products featured in the *Building Green Guide* are readily available in Wisconsin.

The *Building Green Guide* was designed as a searchable online database, although it can also be printed. To access the *Guide*, go directly to the UW-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC) publication at <http://www.uwex.edu/shwec/Pubs/pdf/615.SG.0502.pdf> and the range of green product choices will be at your fingertips.

For more information about green building and related topics, visit the SHWEC web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/shwec> Contact our office at 683-4168 if you have difficulty accessing these sites.

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