



By Colleen Dugan — Capital-Gazette

It can be easy being green

BY KATIE ARCIERI
Staff Writer

With so many eco-friendly home products on the market these days, the quest to "be green" can feel overwhelming.

But experts said you don't have to rush out and buy solar panels.

"Before you go out and spend a bunch of money, it's so easy to make some easy daily habit changes," said Robyn Griggs Lawrence, editor-in-chief of *Natural Home* magazine.

You can always go back to the basics: replacing incandescent light bulbs with fluorescent bulbs, installing energy efficient windows and turning off lights when you leave a room.

But here are some ways to take your green efforts a step further:

Look to your floor. Installing green alternative types of flooring, such as the increasingly popular bamboo, can make a big difference in your home, Ms. Lawrence said.

Flooring made from cork can even "save a tree's life," Ms. Lawrence said. "They don't

even have to kill the tree, it's basically the bark."

Bamboo and cork are available at Madison Interiors, a home design business carrying several environmentally friendly products throughout its showroom in Odenton.

Company President Hamed Alaghebandian said his bamboo flooring ranges from \$5 to \$25 a square foot while the cork flooring averages between \$18 and \$24 a square foot.

"It's not only environmentally friendly, but it's fashionable," he said. "Certainly bamboo and cork are products that are looked at quite a bit."

But watch out, these green types of flooring are very delicate and can easily be scratched by high heels, Mr. Alaghebandian said.

Use less toxic paint. Ms. Lawrence said nearly every paint company has an environmentally friendly line now.

For example, the Benjamin Moore water-based interior paint line has low "volatile organic compounds," which are known to cause respiratory irritations and central nervous system disorders.

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GREEN

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Madison Interiors offers its Benjamin Moore paint line and the average price per gallon is around \$60, Mr. Alaghebandian said. He said the paint is a high quality line that needs fewer coats of paint than less expensive brands.

"It's a popular line with designers," he said. "It's very easy to touch up, it's very easy to apply."

McCormick Paints, a family owned Rockville-based company, also offers a line of environmentally friendly paint at its Annapolis store on Solomons Island Road, one of the company's 24 locations. The company's paint received its GREEN WISE paint certification from the Coatings Research Group Inc. The company's certified products include three interior paint lines and several color choices.

Maryellen Mantyla, director of marketing for McCormick Paints, said the company's paints already have a very loyal following.

Now, "the old stand-by they've always loved is now green," she said.

Ms. Mantyla said the company's paint best suited for the general consumer ranges between \$27 and \$42 a gallon, depending on the color and finish.

She added that the company does not increase its prices simply because the products are green-certified.

What about being green outside your home? Cut back on the amount of fertilizer and herbicide treatments.

Many urban citizens are treating their lawns with pesticides that have contributed to runoff into bays and harbors, said Cheryl Long, editor-in-chief of *Mother Earth News* magazine.

But Ms. Long said fertilizing a lawn every other year can be just as effective.

"Companies love to tell you, you have to do this every year," Ms. Long said.

Don't throw your leaves away in the fall. Shred leaves with a lawn mower and use those leaves as mulch, Ms. Long said.

Grass clippings can also be used as fertilizer, she said. The clippings serve as a "super mulch" for a food garden, she said.

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ABOVE: Madison Interiors offers eco-friendly furniture, such as this dark gray fiber chair.

LEFT: These eco-friendly rugs that are made with vegetable dye.

OUTDOOR LIVING MADE EASY!