

[<< back to story >>](#)

## Portland Press Herald Maine Sunday Telegram

### Shown in techno-color

Everything at this Freeport show house – from its solar panels to its bamboo towels – is decidedly green.

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Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer

A sign detailing one of the many green efforts put into the show house is displayed on the wall of the L.L. Bean room.

FREEPORT — You've got the solar panels, the energy-efficient windows and kitchen cabinets that are made with the husks of sunflower seeds. Your bathrooms are outfitted with low-flow fixtures, and the floor tiles are made out of recycled car windshields.

Now what?

It might tarnish your carefully crafted eco-centric image to fill an energy-efficient "green" home with synthetic fabrics and furniture made from tropical hardwoods grown in vanishing rainforests. But how do you "decorate green" so that the furnishings, bedding – even the towels in the bathroom – are environmentally friendly?



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer

Above: Not just this Freeport house but its contents are green. The library contains antiques as well as furniture made from recycled wood, and a rug made from wool, linen and silk.

Interior designers, furniture makers, artists and home-furnishing businesses show how in the region's first green decorator show house, which opened Friday and runs through April 19. The event is a benefit for Freeport Community Services and features one of the few houses in the country to earn the top green certification rating from the U.S. Green Building Council.

The four-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath house on Cranberry Ridge Road was built by Wright-Ryan Construction and is considered the greenest house in New England.



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer

The Thomas Moser room contains furniture made by Thos. Moser Cabinetmakers from certified new growth forest wood, as well as organic cotton, linen and leather. The wood is finished with oil and furniture paste containing no volatile organic compounds.

The designers who worked on it were eager to take on the challenge of using only eco-friendly products.

"I think it is a very interesting concept, having people really be conscious of what's being put in here," said Judy Pascal of Judy Pascal Antiques and Interiors in Portland, who decorated the master bedroom. "I've done many show houses, but this one is really interesting."

#### FURNITURE WITH A CONSCIENCE?

Furniture makers are jumping on board the green bandwagon as their consumers increasingly demand that their armoires, bookcases, beds and coffee tables come from wood that wasn't harvested in such a way that rainforest is destroyed or workers exploited. Even big-box stores such as Target have introduced lines of eco-friendly furniture.



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer

The dining room table is finished without the use of high volatile organic compounds.

"Deforestation is the third largest carbon producer on our whole planet," said Susan Inglis, executive director of the Sustainable Furniture Council, a nonprofit coalition of more than 160 furniture industry professionals. "Much of that is because of illegal logging. Much of that is because of the needs of the furniture industry, which uses the most beautiful wood in the forest and which adds the highest value to wood that's grown anywhere."

All of the wood in the Freeport show house is either recycled or sustainably harvested.

In the master bedroom upstairs, the custom-made queen-sized bed, bedside lamps and side table are all made of recycled architectural pieces. The detailed columns, scrollwork and other decorative items that once added beauty to someone else's home have found new life as functional furniture.

The living room and dining room are filled with furniture from Thomas Moser's Freeport showroom. The



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer  
These black Adirondack-style chairs that sit outside the show house are made from recycled soda bottles.

Maine-based furniture designer uses only domestic hardwoods, mostly American black cherry from Pennsylvania. He also buys wood from West Virginia and the Catskills in New York.

"Most of it's coming from family-owned forests," said Steve Wyman, manager of the Freeport showroom.

The furniture is oiled and waxed with nontoxic products, and all of the byproducts of the wood are used so none goes to waste. Some of the leftover wood is transformed into toy cars, bookmarks, wooden spoons and other products by local artisans. Some of it is sold as kindling. Even the sawdust is used in garden mulch.



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer  
The green show house on Cranberry Ridge Road in Freeport has solar panels and collectors, a metal roof and large, energy-efficient windows.

#### FABRICS FROM RECYCLABLES

Textiles are also going green as manufacturers turn to alternative materials and eliminate many of the harsh chemicals previously used to soften and finish fabrics.

Debra Smith of Cottage Road Casual Home Furnishings in Yarmouth, who decorated the family room, notes that there are "some amazing fabrics they're coming out with now that are made of recycled products."



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer  
Lead designers Susan Miller, left, and Mabel Gerquest hang a clock made from recycled stove parts by Freeport artist T.J. McDermott.

"A lot of them are actually made from recycled soda bottles," she said. "They translate into beautiful fabrics that have a nice hand to them."

In the show house, only all-natural fabrics are used. A whimsical wool-and-cotton dandelion rug in the living room was made in Nepal. There's a wool, silk and linen faux bois rug by Martha Stewart in the library.

In the bedrooms and bathrooms, the towels and linens are made partially of bamboo. Bamboo is rapidly renewable, meaning it can be harvested in just three to five years, as opposed to the decades it takes for hardwood trees to reach maturity. Bamboo can also be grown without pesticides and fertilizers, and has natural anti-fungal and anti-microbial properties.

Toweling off with bamboo may sound uncomfortable, but in reality, the material is soft and more absorbent than cotton.

There are environmental issues with some of the manufacturing processes that turn bamboo from a wood into a fabric, but it is still a better choice than a synthetic fabric made from petroleum or conventional cotton.

If you're concerned about manufacturing, look for textile products that have been certified eco-friendly. The bamboo towels and linens in the Freeport house are made by Cuddledown and carry the Oeko-Tex certification, or European standard certification.

"That means the manufacturing is environmentally sound," said Erin Gigliello, a spokeswoman for Cuddledown. "They don't use any harmful substances at all, and they're either easily recyclable or naturally biodegradable."

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[<< back to story >>](#)



Gordon Chibroski/Staff Photographer  
Artist Edward Hoppe created the wall art "Deer" from recycled wood.

#### IF YOU GO

**WHAT:** Tour of a Platinum-certified LEED Show House

**WHERE:** 10 Cranberry Ridge Road, Freeport

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Wednesday-Sunday through April 19

**HOW MUCH:** Tickets cost \$15 and are available at the Freeport Community Center, and at Skillins in Falmouth, Brunswick and Cumberland.

**INFORMATION:** 865-3985;  
[www.FCSMaine.org](http://www.FCSMaine.org)

**FOR DESIGNERS:** Are you a designer with an interest in learning more about eco-friendly products? Visit [www.todlgreen.com](http://www.todlgreen.com).

#### GREEN ON THE INSIDE

**IT'S HARD ENOUGH** to choose a pattern for a sofa or a style for a dining room table. Now environmentally savvy consumers have something else to worry about – will their choice of furniture save the planet?

**THE SUSTAINABLE FURNITURE** Council, a nonprofit group trying to raise environmental awareness among furniture manufacturers, retailers and designers, supports third-party certification that makes it easier for consumers to tell which products are environmentally friendly. Third-party certification means that an independent body such as the Forest Stewardship Council has verified that a company has used only eco-conscious methods from the time a piece of wood is harvested to the time it's turned into a table or chair.

**THE SFC HAS ALSO** developed its own strict industry standards with the help of organizations such as the Rainforest Alliance and the World Wildlife Fund.

**THE AMERICAN HOME** Furnishings Alliance, a more broad-based industry group, unveiled its environmental certification program last fall. Companies that meet rigorous environmental standards, from using certified wood products to reducing formaldehyde emissions, will be able to tag their products with a "Sustainable By Design" logo that tells consumers they can feel comfortable purchasing it.

**NEED MORE HELP?** Here are some questions the SFC suggests that consumers ask when shopping for a new piece of furniture:

**From where** does the wood come? Was it legally harvested from responsibly managed forests?

Is the wood third-party certified? Look for high-standard certifications from groups such as the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

**Does the manufacturer** have a Social Equity Code of Conduct for its production processes? Such a code is the only assurance that workers are fairly treated, earn decent wages and work in a safe environment. Every manufacturer should be able to provide a written code of conduct.

**Does the manufacturer** have an energy-use reduction plan?

**Where was the furniture** manufactured? Buying local cuts greenhouse gas emissions and supports the local economy. Look for furniture produced close to

where you live, and that uses raw materials sourced within a 500-mile radius of the manufacturing facility.

**Were any high volatile organic compound finishes used?** VOCs are harmful pollutants emitted by varnishes and lacquers that are released during the manufacturing process and into your home. Water-based finishes are best.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION,** visit the [SFC Web site](#).

#### **GUIDE TO ECO-FRIENDLY FABRICS**

##### **ORGANIC COTTON:**

Conventional cotton is a natural fiber, but growing cotton with pesticides is an environmental nightmare, requiring huge amounts of pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals. According to the Sustainable Furniture Council, the production of conventional cotton accounts for 25 percent of all pesticide use globally and 10 percent of all the herbicides used in the world. Certified organic cotton is a more Earth-friendly choice. It's used in towels and linens, but it also being used more in upholstery.

**BAMBOO** is a giant woody grass that grows fast and can be harvested within just five years, making it a much more renewable resource than many species of trees. It regenerates from original plantings, and its sizable root system helps prevent erosion. Bamboo can be grown without pesticides and fertilizers, is four times as strong as oak, and more absorbent than cotton.

**HEMP:** Growing industrial hemp uses little or no pesticides. The fiber of the hemp plant is extracted from the stem and is known as bast.

**ABACA** is a large plant of the banana family that grows in the Philippines. It's also called Manila hemp.

**SEA CELL** is a so-called "smart fiber" that combines cellulose and seaweed. It's not only natural, it's supposed to be good for you too. This "living" fabric locks in all the health benefits of seaweed, including anti-inflammatory properties. According to the manufacturer, nutrients such as calcium, magnesium and vitamin E are released by body moisture when the fiber is next to the skin. SeaCell is now being used in everything from underwear to upholstery, linens and mattress ticking.

**SEAWEED** is rich in trace elements, protects the skin and has anti-inflammatory properties

**LINEN** is a natural fabric made from flax. It's stronger than cotton and gets softer the more it is washed.

**RAMIE** is a vegetable fiber known for its length and toughness. It comes from a plant

in the nettle family. Although ramie is strong, it's not very durable, so it is usually blended with cotton or wool.

#### **GREEN LECTURES**

**FREEPORT COMMUNITY SERVICES** is offering lectures throughout the green decorator show house. All lectures will begin at 2 p.m. at 10 Cranberry Ridge Road.

**April 6** – "Eco-Friendly Destinations" – Midge Vreeland, Spannocchia Foundation

**April 10** – "Efficient Insulation for Your Home" – Matt Delaney, Warmtech Solutions

**April 12** – "Carbon Free Homes" – Lotte Schlegel, Efficiency Maine

**April 13** – "Case Study of Cranberry Ridge and Overview of Green Design" – Richard Renner, Richard Renner Architects

**April 17** – "Home Energy Audits" – Cury Caputo