

Sustaining the right design

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WHEN you are building a new home, the design stage is the best time to consider what materials you are using.

Many things are unable to be retrofitted, replaced easily or affordably. Flooring is a great example of this.

And selecting sustainable items for your home can help you save money and the planet.

So what sustainable materials can you consider?

Reclaimed, recycled and renewable timbers are a great place to start. They can be used for cabinetry, flooring, furniture, and even benchtops.

There are cabinetry products that are now being produced from 100 per cent recycled materials.

Soft furnishings such as

curtains, carpets and fabrics for furniture can also be made sustainably. Think cottons, linens and cotton velvets as an alternative to synthetic fibres.

Some carpet manufacturers are now starting to produce carpet from bamboo fibres, with another made from recycled fishing nets.

Another thing to consider is how the products you select work with sustainable design features for the home. An example of this is when passive solar design and thermal mass have been designed to work together, yet materials chosen are not allowing these features to work optimally.

For example, using timber floors when a concrete slab is used for thermal mass is not ideal. The timber acts as an insulator instead of allowing the concrete to release heat back into the building slowly.



Sustainable house building materials can help you save money and the planet.

Up-cycling is another way to be sustainable, by using preloved items that can be re-purposed and remodelled to suit modern styles.

Finally, sustainability is not always about choosing recycled or reclaimed products. It's also about choosing products built to last so they don't end up in landfill.

Products that are cheap to produce end up holding minimal value, and are therefore thrown out which doesn't make for a great sustainable story.

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TIPS FOR USING SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS

- Use recycled, natural and reclaimed products where you can
- Ensure you select products that work with any sustainable design features of the home, for example, don't place insulating floorboards above a thermal mass concrete slab
- Engage an expert who is able to help you incorporate sustainable features into your home. This should help you make decisions from a design and material selection perspective and could save you a lot of money in the long term
- Sustainability is also about choosing products that will stand the test of time
- Choose well designed and well manufactured products that won't end up in landfill
- Use water based sealants instead of polyurethane
- Paints with low or no VOC will reduce solvents being released into the air as they dry

