

Home & Garden Television

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Earth-Friendly Bedroom Basics

Sleep sustainably in a healthy space that's good for you and great for the environment.

By Caren Baginski

Applying eco-friendly style to your bedroom isn't a fad; it's one of the healthiest things to do when decorating your home. Don't let harmful chemicals and toxins take you lying down. Here's how to put up a fight for green in your bedroom.

Breathe Easier

- Air quality is important because you spend so much time in the bedroom at night, says green architect/designer Michelle Kaufmann, founder and chairwoman of [Michelle Kaufmann Designs](#). She recommends operable windows for cross ventilation/natural ventilation and HEPA filters in vacuums.
- Buy a stylish ceiling fan to circulate hot and cool air, and save money on energy bills.
- Choose low/no-VOC paints and stains for walls, ceiling and furniture.
- Wash your bedding each week to cut down on mold, mildew and dust mite accumulation.
- If you're prone to allergies, avoid down pillows and comforters. Instead, look for hypoallergenic and organic pillows filled with wool, cotton, millet hulls (99 percent dust free), buckwheat, kapok (a natural seed fiber) and shredded latex.



The master bedroom in the [Green Home](#) shows you how to sleep and save the planet.

Choose a Green Mattress and Box Spring

Invest in the most important part of your bedroom: the mattress. "Everything you bring into your home has a potential to off-gas, so when you chose products to sleep on, you should look at what they're made of," says Greg Snowden, creator and founder of the Green Fusion Design Center.

Choose a mattress that's toxin-free and doesn't contain polyurethane foam and fire-retardants such as PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers). Animals exposed to PDBEs showed learning deficiencies, and high levels of the chemical have been found in women's breast milk according to PollutionInPeople.org. But you'll have to get a mattress that passes the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission tests for fire, so look to wool mattresses for natural fire-retardant qualities.

Green options include organic wool- and cotton-filled mattresses that are just as comfortable as a chemical-filled

mattress. The greenest option is latex. [Savvy Rest](#), a green mattress company, offers organic mattresses made from 95 percent latex (100 percent does not exist) that don't suffer from lumps and gullies over time.

Eco-friendly mattresses are also available from [Green Sleep](#). Zem Joaquin, green blogger at Ecofabulous.com, favors Green Sleep in her home. "The rubber is harvested in Malaysia," she says. "They go and tap the trees like you would for maple syrup and bake it up into nice, fluffy cakes. The comfort is phenomenal."

National Geographic's The Green Guide suggests supplementing your mattress with a natural, untreated solid wood box spring made from FSC-certified wood.

Reuse Furniture and Fabric

- Instead of buying a new bedroom set, take a look at what you have and refresh it. TV-dinner trays, a stack of old luggage and even a fallen tree trunk in your backyard can become a nightstand.
- Save gas by shopping locally at thrift stores, antiques shops and architectural salvage stores. You can often find old headboards to upholster or paint, giving a singular look to the bed for less. An old door turned on its side and wall mounted is another eco-friendly, and rustic, solution.
- For inexpensive DIY pillows or curtain panels, visit fabric shops and ask for their leftover material scraps. Or, repurpose old blankets and sheets for a comforter that's completely your own.

Buy Organic Bedding

What is organic bedding? It's sheets and pillowcases made from fibers grown without synthetic pesticides or genetic engineering. But is all organic bedding truly eco-friendly? "Eco-friendly is the overriding umbrella and organic is underneath that," Kaufmann says. "If it's organic but it uses a lot of resources from the earth in terms of how it's made, then it's not necessarily eco-friendly in the holistic sense."

But organic is still preferred when it comes to your health. For example, "consumers don't realize that many bedsheets are typically treated with formaldehyde to make them soft," Snowden says. Avoid this known carcinogen and opt for chemical-free sheets like organic cotton or bamboo. Buying organic doesn't only do you a favor, it's also better for the world, says Snowden. "The cotton industry uses one quarter of all the pesticides that are consumed in the world. For that reason alone, it's important to support organic cotton sheets and bedding." From Target to Ralph Lauren, beautiful, luxurious eco-friendly bedding is everywhere. For maximum softness, look for thread counts from 250 to 400.

Other tricks:

- For blankets, wool is greener than polyester.
- Be suspect when you see the words "repellents" or "proof" on bedding labels, which indicate the product has been treated with chemicals.
- Organic cotton mattress pads help protect your mattress from dust mites.
- Make your own duvet by sewing together two large bamboo sheets.

(Contributions by Jenny Jedeikin)