





# Going Going GREEN

From organic cotton clothing to coveted hybrid vehicles, being conscious of one's global impact is a hot new trend. While for years the environment has suffered in our harmful hands, the planet is currently enjoying an eco-friendly revival. **Madeleine Watson** discovers the ways the bathroom scene is also going green.

It's bathroom renovation time. Finally you can rip out that brown and orange tessellated floor tiling and the pink ceramic toilet to make way for stylish, contemporary features such as a swing-glass shower door and in-floor heating. Removing those floral wall tiles and the ever-so-popular beige 80s spa bath will fill you with joy, but what to put in their place?

With state governments around the country reminding us that every drop counts, how do you create a stylish, modern bathroom which you can pamper yourself in, that's still 'green' conscious? Never fear as more and more companies are jumping on the eco-bandwagon after realising just how serious consumers are about natural, earth friendly products which still offer superior results and finishes. After all, if we're prepared to straddle a bucket whilst showering ourselves in an effort to save water, incorporating environmentally friendly products into the bathroom will be a petrochemical-free breeze.

When embarking on a bathroom renovation you will find yourself inundated with choices and it's important to keep environmental issues in mind. Being well-informed is the best defence against poorly chosen building materials and fixtures so don't be afraid to ask contractors and suppliers questions about product ingredients and capabilities.

Always check to see if there's a less environmentally harmful product on the market and be prepared to change your design to incorporate more suitable materials or fixtures should you find them. Always remember though that you don't have to substitute luxury for the environment as there are plenty of building, cleaning and beauty products on the market today which offer both.

## MATERIAL WORLD

Whether you are building your dream bathroom from scratch or simply remodelling, there is a wealth of eco-friendly building materials you can use which will not only improve the health of your bathroom, but will aid in the long-term health of the environment.

Non-fibreglass insulation is a great place to start as there are several products on the market at the moment which are made from more natural materials. Studies in the US have shown that fibreglass insulation has the potential to release harmful particles into the home and environment. To guard against this, insulation made from cotton fibres or polyester is now being produced which are safe to handle, hypo-allergenic, Australian Asthma Foundation Approved (for polyester insulation) and most importantly non-toxic for both your family and the environment.

Polished concrete is also a fantastic option for your bathroom floor and countertop as it can look absolutely stunning, and very contemporary, when small pieces of glass and stone are added to the mix. One of the main benefits of using polished concrete surfaces is that they're a great ecological choice as the concrete itself often contains up to 90 per cent recycled materials, reducing the amount of new materials used in your bathroom construction.

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Another great way to save the environment is by creating more areas for natural light to enter the bathroom. If you have a single-paned glass window in your bathroom, why not consider widening it to a double pane, allowing more natural light to enter. Also, using glass which is double-glazed will help insulate your bathroom further, meaning less need for heating in the cooler months. If you are a little worried about the neighbours staring in at you through your extra wide window while you're showering, why not consider a skylight? Skylights are attached to the roof and offer the benefits of natural light, whilst preserving your modesty at the same time.



Most old bathrooms have appalling plumbing so re-plumbing during a renovation is often a great way to cut down on leaks caused by old pipes. Consider swapping PVC pipes and drains for cast-iron or copper ones as they leach fewer chemicals into the water that enters and leaves your bathroom. Keep in mind that swapping your outgoing water pipes is as essential as swapping your incoming ones because even though you will not be using your grey water directly, it all ends up in our storm water systems, and the less chemically-affected water in the environment the better.

Hot water is an absolute necessity in the bathroom, but why not consider replacing your old gas water heater with a new Continuous Flow hot water system. These tanks heat water as it's needed rather than keeping the tank full of hot water at all times. This means that these systems do not need a constant heat source, so they produce a lot less emissions than older heaters. The best benefit? Because water is heated as you need it, your hot water will never run out!

### FIX YOUR FIXTURES

One of the easiest ways to make your bathroom 'green' friendly is by replacing old fixtures with newer, more environmentally conscious alternatives. Choose a toilet with an 'AAA' rated dual-flush system as they use 30 per cent less water than older dual-flush models, and make sure you always use the half flush.

Install a water saving showerhead (available from hardware and bathroom supply stores) as older showerheads can use more than two buckets of water a minute, whereas water saver heads use less than one bucket. This means that you can use up to 1,500 buckets of water less a year (based on a four minute shower) which will save the average Australian family \$150 a year in hot water bills.

Another great way to save water in the shower is to install a shower head which has an added temperature control function. Products such as Neco's Every Drop Shower Saver (available from [www.neco.com.au](http://www.neco.com.au)) can be added to existing showerheads and have a handle on them that when pushed will turn off the shower, but keep the water at your chosen temperature. You don't need to have the water running while you're lathering yourself in soap or while waiting for conditioner to sink in but the great thing about this device is that as soon as the water is turned back on, it will be at the original temperature. No more cold-water shower dance!

Remember also to keep your showers to a maximum length of four minutes. Poor time-keeping skills are no excuse when cute little

devices such as Neco's Water Saving Shower Timer Duck are easily obtainable. Just attach to the shower door or wall and set the countdown timer and your friendly waterproof friend will politely beep at you when it's time to get out.

Water saving faucets for the bath and sink are also available and work by aerating the water as it comes out of the tap meaning that you don't have to wash your hands under a trickle of water. Aerating means you can still enjoy a decent flow of water through the tap however wasted water is reduced by up to 70 per cent.

### SAFE SOLUTIONS

So you've built a 'green' bathroom, but how do you clean it without compromising the environment? Tri-Nature, a 100 per cent Australian owned company ([www.greenclean.trinature.com](http://www.greenclean.trinature.com), (03) 9532 2349), have solved that problem for you by creating a range of heavy duty cleaning products which get the job done without the use of harsh chemicals.

Brian Mclean, Tri-Nature's Director of Technical Services, sees the company "...as a professional opportunity to combine natural and renewable resources with advanced technology". Their Excel Bactericidal Cleaner is a friendlier alternative to bathroom bleach as its organic acids and ingredients, such as Oil of Spearmint and Xanthum Gum, break down fat and soap residue as well as mould and scale found commonly in shower recesses and vanity basins.

The Tri-Nature range also includes a fantastic natural-based solvent glass cleaner called Hyaline which not only gets your shower screen spotless, but repels dirt and oil so that your glass stays smear-free for longer.

Air-fresheners are a common bathroom item, but many homeowners seem to be under the misconception that a fresh, perfumed smell equals clean air when in fact it's the complete opposite. Spraying air-freshener in the bathroom adds petrochemicals, artificial perfumes and propellants to the air you breathe and really only succeeds in dulling your sense of smell, rather than purifying the air. Why not try a natural product such as Neco's Lemon Myrtle air-freshener which mixes essential oil with distilled water to create an anti-fungal and anti-bacterial spray which is 100 per cent petrochemical-free, meaning no more nasty chemicals in your lungs or the environment.

Microfibre cloths have become a popular cleaning utensil in the fight against chemicals in the bathroom. The cloths fine fibres need only water and a little elbow grease to scrub away grime and bacteria and eliminate the need for chemical products. Available from most supermarkets, these cloths are washable and durable.

### GET YOUR GREEN ON

Go on, I dare you to make your own bathroom cleaning products! Vinegar is a great natural disinfectant which makes it a perfect cleaning solution for the bathroom. Just mix one part vinegar with one part water in a new spray bottle and use it to clean basins, toilet seats and shower curtains or let it sit in shower recesses for a few minutes before wiping down, as it's great at breaking up soap fat. By pouring vinegar straight into the toilet bowl and scrubbing as usual you will clean and disinfect your toilet without flushing harsh chemicals into our waterways.

It's all well and good to want to be environmentally aware, but how many of you would be willing to forgo your bathroom beauty regime for the sake of eliminating a few chemicals? Well thanks to companies such as Tri-Nature and Neco you never have to make that decision, as both provide a comprehensive range of beauty products which are healthy for your skin and the environment.

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Why not have your own DIY spa day with the help of Kyphi (available from Tri-Nature) natural products? Half-fill the bathtub and add Kyphi's Bath Salts to luxuriously soak tired muscles. Treat yourself to a facial with the range's Clear and Calm Treatment Mask before lathering your body in their Rejuvenating Body Cream. At the basin why not consider swapping your chemical-based makeup remover for a more natural option by using Kyphi's Hydrating Facial Cleanser, a delicate milky cleanser which gently removes dirt and impurities. The best thing about using these products instead of their chemical-based equivalents is that when you wash them down the sink you know that you aren't adding toxins to the stormwater system.

Jump on the celebrity bandwagon and start taking responsibility for the environment. It's easy to begin, as highlighted in this piece, by introducing 'green' products into your bathroom. From chemical free cleaning products to AAA rated fixtures, you now know everything you need in order to become a mean, green eco-friendly machine!

