

Southern Living®

Fresh & Easy Ideas

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Cherry Tomatoes By the Handful

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Secret Ingredient

special home section

GOOD DESIGN GOES GREEN

The Three Sides of (Chef) Emeril





The sofa is crafted from wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). It is covered in a cotton/rayon fabric from Scalamandré. Ask at your local carpet showroom if they have samples or returns on sale. That's how designer Shanon Munn found this wool rug.



The living room's conversation area features custom-designed chairs crafted from FSC-certified wood. A bar cabinet in the corner is made of antique wood and salvaged architectural parts.

Lasting Elegance

This coastal getaway offers a dream mix of luxury and livability with natural fabrics and smart investments. By **Amy Bickers Mercer**

Look outside. What's good for nature is almost always pleasing to the eye. The same is true for your home. For proof, look to this Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, retreat by Shanon Munn of Ambi Design Studio. The living room and master bedroom are prime examples of thoughtful design that dazzles.

Shanon doesn't market herself as a Green designer. In fact, she hopes that one

day recycling, reducing, and reusing won't seem so special because everyone will be doing it. She approaches each project in steps. The first step is a beautiful design. Then she decides how to make it happen using environmentally friendly products.

Color Smarts Shanon starts by using low-VOC (volatile organic compounds) paint on the walls. Regular paint can release low-level toxic emissions, and most

new products put chemicals into the air (this is called "off-gassing"). Low-VOC paint does not off-gas and only emits a low odor during application. Brands that offer low- or no-VOC paints include Benjamin Moore Eco-Spec, Sherwin-Williams Harmony, and Duron Genesis.

Material Matters In the living room the sofa and two ottomans are custom-built from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified wood and upholstered in cotton/rayon fabrics. The master bedroom's four-poster bed is crafted from rattan, a fast-growing, sustainable product. It can be grown in natural forests without disturbing the existing structure and balance. (For more on rattan and bamboo, visit www.inbar.int.)

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Quick Tip

Choose plant- and animal-based fabrics over synthetic materials. Leather is a great choice for its durability and long life. There are different grades of leather (bonded, split grain, top grain, and full grain), so research before shopping to choose the best grade for your lifestyle and budget.



“Start small, and then the next step seems more accessible. People think they have to do all or nothing, and that’s so not true.” SHANON MUNN, DESIGNER

Green design doesn't have to mean mod and sleek. A master bedroom with eco-friendly touches can look luxurious too. The carpeting is a natural wool product from EcoFinishes. See more options at www.ecofinishes.com.

Fabric Facts The draperies are sheer cotton. Shanon says it's always best to choose a natural, plant-based fabric, such as cotton or a cotton/rayon blend. “People don't realize that rayon is a plant-based fiber. It is a manufactured fiber, but it comes from a plant,” Shanon says. The organic cotton bed linens in the bedroom are from Coyuchi. The bedspread is made of conventionally grown cotton.

If you have the option, choose organic cotton, because regular cotton plants are sprayed with pesticides. Organic isn't available? It's still better to choose cotton over a synthetic material such as polyester, Shanon says, because most synthetic fabrics are made using petroleum.

Natural leather is another good choice for upholstery. The four lounge chairs in the living room will stand up to wear and tear, reducing the need for future recovering.

Secondhand Style Antiques aren't just attractive heirlooms. Using them is another way to reduce the impact on the environment. Shanon found a vintage coffee table at a Maryland antiques dealer. In the bedroom she had an antique slipper chair recovered.

Another good idea is to look for returns and floor samples. The blue wool carpet in the living room was made in the wrong color. Shanon snatched up the mistake from the showroom. The two crystal bedside lamps and the dressing table in the bedroom are floor samples from Brunswick & Fils. Items such as these are good for your home's indoor air quality because they have been off-gassing for a while.

Beyond saving the planet, think about this: You can lessen the impact on your bank account. “You're getting a deal for used stuff that is still new to you,” Shanon explains. “This is recycling at its most basic.” ●



- **Buy floor samples.** This is a great way to find used furniture. Plus, you'll pay less.
- **Use low-VOC paints.** “It's so easy. You're not sacrificing a thing. You don't have to change your color selections. You're just specifying a different kind of paint,” says Shanon.
- **When buying furniture,** opt for American hardwoods. Nearly twice as much hardwood grows each year as is harvested in the U.S., according to the American Hardwood Information Center. The volume of hardwoods in American forests today is 90% larger than it was 50 years ago. For more information visit www.hardwoodcouncil.com.
- **Choose quality items** that you can refurbish and refinish over time. “People are hasty. They run to a discount store and get a bookcase that's not going to last. They think they're getting a better deal,” Shanon says. “Purchase a quality piece. Think of furniture as an investment.”

Shanon's Tips