

## Should I go green (or perhaps light green)?

“Going green” is something that is getting a lot of media coverage nowadays. Even the president speaks about the environment in most of his speeches. While you may or may not agree with his approach or agenda when it comes to the environment, you get to call the shots when it comes to your house and how green it is. But how do you know what’s best, what’s practical, and what’s cost-effective? The answer: Get some advice from people who have your best interests at heart. This should be your builder and an energy consultant.

How green you want to go will be determined, in part, by how long you plan to be in the house. Will it be long enough for you to recover your investment? If you have a job that could result in you being transferred in a few years, then you probably would not want to invest in something that has a payout longer than that. If, on the other hand, you plan to be in the house for fifteen-plus years, you can make the investment, get the federal rebate, and enjoy savings for years to come.

There are many energy-saving and environment-friendly options that are not terribly costly, however, such as selecting appliances that are Energy Star rated. These appliances do not cost more than those without the rating; it is just a matter of shopping around and matching what you want with something that has been engineered and manufactured to meet the Energy Star requirements. You can also talk to your builder about using products that are friendly to the environment. For example, there are many lumber products engineered and manufactured from recycled materials, such as wood chips, that are also very cost-competitive. These products are oftentimes stronger and more durable than raw wood.

While Energy Star and LEED are among the most popular green-related certifications, many utility companies, including the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), have other certifications available, costing from about \$750 to \$2,500. Obtaining these certifications can bring piece of mind in knowing that your house has been inspected by a third party who has determined it was built to certain standards, as well as serve as an investment in the future, when the time comes to sell your home. No doubt energy-efficient, green homes will be in even greater demand as time goes on. It can only help your resale value if you can show that your house was certified as compliant when it was built.

The bottom line is that going green—or determining what shade of green is most appropriate for you—can best be achieved by getting advice from knowledgeable builders and energy consultants.

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