



LIFE AT HOME

DECOR • DOMESTIC ARTS • RENOVATIONS • RENTALS • RESALE

EDITOR: LISA MONFORTON 235-7428 FAX: 235-7379

WWW.CALGARYHERALD.COM

SATURDAY, MAY 26, 2007

AROUND THE HOUSE

These mitts are oh so hip

PRODUCT • Oven mitts, those old kitchen staples, have taken a tip from the Post-It note phenomenon.

Rather than stuff oven mitts in the drawer or lose them under a counter full of flour cans and mixing bowls, why not try out a pair of Hip Mitts that stick to an apron and also double as pockets, \$39.99.

Check them out online at www.loopiedoop.com.

— CanWest News Service

Curb appeal priorities

STUDY • Lax home sellers whose exterior paint is peeling can breathe a sigh of relief — sort of. A new study from The Home Depot Canada by Leger Marketing found that prospective home buyers look first at a potential home's landscaping (51 per cent) before their roving eyes focus on the paint job (15 per cent).

Though curb appeal is certainly important, a home-for-sale's attractiveness doesn't stop at the front door. Albertans say they first notice the state of a home's flooring when they cross the threshold (35 per cent), followed by lighting (24 per cent) and interior paint (6 per cent). Not surprisingly, kitchens (66 per cent) were rated as the most scrutinized room for Albertans buying a home, and 44 per cent of respondents said the kitchen must be renovated within the last two years for them to consider putting in an offer.

So what does this mean for home sellers as real estate season pushes off into full swing? Mow the lawn, plant some flowers, paint, and refinish hardwood or deep clean carpets before you list your house.

— Calgary Herald

Starlet twins delve into decor

PRODUCT • They may dress a bit like boho bag ladies, but fortunately Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's wardrobe preferences haven't influenced their line of furniture, area rugs and lighting. The twins have launched the mary-kateandashley home essentials collection, a furniture and accessories line designed for tweens and teens.

"Our new furniture collection is consistent with our overall home line. We offer girls the opportunity to create a unique space of their own that is fun, sophisticated and feminine," the twins explain in a press release.

The bedroom collection includes bed sizes from twin to queen, bunk beds, nightstands, armoires, computer desks, hutches, dressers, sweater chests and mirrors. Items are available in 19 colour finishes, making it easy for girls to customize their rooms.

The duo's area rugs range in style from funky geometrics to bold shags in vibrant hues.

The collection is available at select Sears locations and independent home decor retailers across Canada. Or go to www.mary-kateandashley.com.

— Calgary Herald

DECORATING

Safari of savings

With a \$300 budget, a homeowner gives bland, beige powder room a colourful African theme



SUSAN SCHWARTZ
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

This much Lilian Pifko knew: She wanted vertical stripes on the walls of the powder room. And a zebra pattern on the ceiling. Zebra stripes might be hot right now, judging from decor magazines, but to Pifko, the pattern is timeless. She wanted art on the walls and she wanted the references to be African, "because African art is not about perfection but about simplicity and whimsy."

And ultimately, Pifko's imagination and planning, a few litres of paint and a considerable measure of patience transformed the bland builder's beige powder room that had come with the west Montreal townhouse into a wonderfully warm and charming space. For less than \$300.

Pifko, 45, works as an administrator in a pharmaceutical firm today; for years, she was a merchandiser in the

garment industry, designing T-shirts, and her creative skills clearly drove the powder-room project. She designed the space over the course of a year, assembling ideas and editing along the way.

"My whole design started off by being magazine clippings," she said. She'd cut out zebra stripes when she saw them on rugs or chairs or pillows and put them in her powder-room file. When something caught her eye in a catalogue, she'd cut it out as well — like the L-shaped shelves in a Canadian Tire catalogue or the vertical proportions of the black-framed mirror she saw in a recent IKEA catalogue.

SEE SAFARI, PAGE G2

Photos, Phil Carpenter, CanWest News Service
Lilian Pifko went a little wild in her powder room with a safari theme, including a zebra-striped ceiling and some items she already had — all for \$300.



INNOVATION

Fab Tree Hab gives tree house new meaning

CHRIS LACKNER
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE
OTTAWA

Humanity can ease the burden it places on the environment by growing "living, breathing" homes, according to a team of researchers that have created the blueprint for an organic, two-storey "tree house."

If the team of engineers and architects have their way, future habitat construction will require a green thumb as opposed to skills with a saw or a hammer.

The "Fab Tree Hab" is an all-green concept home that will grow from "a few seedlings into a two-storey, water-recycling, energy-efficient abode," according to researchers, largely from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They expect it will take a minimum of five years for one of their homes to grow, depending on the surrounding climate.

"The intention is to create a home that is a positive contribu-

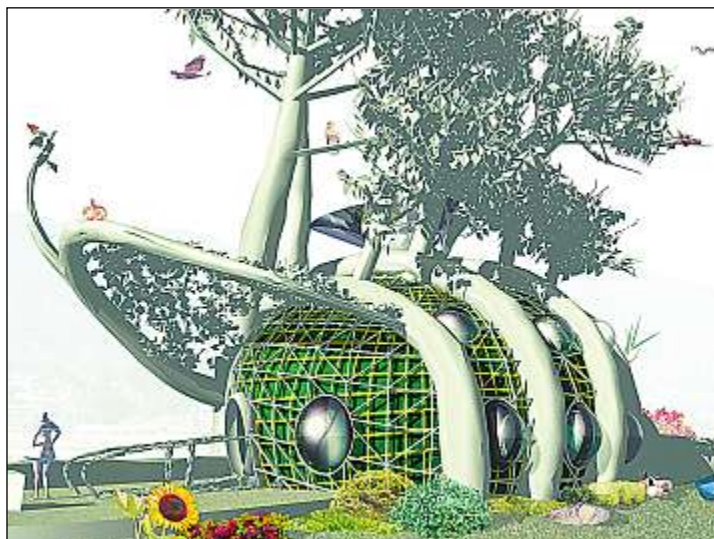


Photo courtesy Mitchell Joachim, Archinode Studio

An artist's rendition of the Fab Tree Hab, an all-green, "living, breathing" home designed by engineers and architects at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

tor to the climate as opposed to something that's taking away," said architect Mitchell Joachim, who helped craft the concept as an MIT doctoral student. "Not only are these zero-emission

homes, but they are healthy for the environment."

Tree Habs would be powered by a combination of solar energy and wind turbines. Instead of being just environmentally

friendly, the structures would naturally blend in with surrounding ecosystems, he said.

The group is currently working with Plantware, an Israeli arboriculture firm, to test techniques for growing the lattice-like weave of vines and roots that would help form the walls of the homes.

The design technique combines an ancient gardening technique called pleaching — the weaving together of tree branches to form living archways and lattices — with computer technology that controls the growth and shape of a tree.

Based on a computer model, wooden jigs would be placed at key portions of young saplings in order to guide the formation of the walls and roof. A dense layer of vines and other plants would be grown to reinforce the exterior, which would also feature soy-based plastic windows.

Tree Habs can be created using almost any tree in its natural habitat, and are expected to have a lifespan of approximately 100

years, said Joachim, who is also the executive director of Terreform, a non-profit group of environmentally conscious architects and urban designers.

"This marks a massive shift in building technology and architecture," he said.

"Just imagine the impact these homes could have on the planet."

Despite the all-natural exterior, the homes are expected to look normal on the inside — the interior walls will be lined with clay and plastered to keep out the elements.

"The interior is absolutely contemporary — if you still want to live in an ultra-urban environment, you can do that," Joachim said, noting wireless Internet and communication technology will allow Tree Habs to include modern technical luxuries.

The homes would include a roof-top water collector and recycling system that can provide water for bathing, cooking and an eco-friendly sanitary system.

samcorea

Marketing your home for all it's worth™

403-870-8811

www.samluxuryhomes.comRE/MAX
HOUSE OF REAL ESTATE

Silver Springs \$485,000

128 Silverthorn Way, NW
Charming 1700 s.f. home, quiet crescent, nothing to do but move in, gleaming hardwood floors, white kitchen with island/breakfast bar, family room with fireplace & sliding doors to flagstone patio, 3 bdms & den, big front verandah.

Strathcona \$799,000

28 Strathlea Place, SW
Location, location, location - backing onto the ravine & into a tranquil grove of trees! This hillside bungalow offers a total of almost 2700 s.f. of living space, 1 + 2 bedrooms, open plan, sunny, + developed walkout basement. Triple garage.

West Springs \$589,000

7 West Jensen Place, SW
Stylish attached bungalow (not a condo), built in 2006, with dev'd basement, 2200 s.f. of development, 3 bedrooms in total, hardwood floors, vaulted ceilings, granite counters, upgraded appliances, skylight, 2 fireplaces, sunny south backyard.

West Springs \$850,000

25 West Cedar Point, SW
Spectacular executive home, 2996 s.f., on quiet cul-de-sac with south backyard, unique open plan with vaulted great room open to beautiful wrap around upper gallery & loft, 3 bdms, den + loft, master bdrm & 6-pc ensuite with fireplace.

Springbank Hill \$589,000

218 Springbank Villas, SW
Carefree townhouse living, close to shops, park & golfing, bungalow with loft + dev'd basement - almost 2200 s.f. of living space, stylish, like new condition, 2 bdms, slate floor, granite counters, vaulted ceiling, 2 fireplaces, wet bar & Murphy bed.

Discovery Ridge \$1,095,000

8 Discovery Valley Cove, SW
Griffiths Woods Park on your front step, ideal location, with views overlooking the greenbelt, stylish architecturally designed, professionally decorated bungalow with developed walkout, 3500+ s.f., 1 + 2 bdms, home gym, fireplace on deck.

Montreaux \$675,000

113 Tremblant Way, SW
New home, 2282 s.f., stylish & contemporary, high ceilings, chef's kitchen with granite counters/stainless steel appls & backsplash, California shutters + blinds, master bdrm with fireplace, ensuite 2-head shower & bath with waterfall faucet.

Strathcona \$1,150,000

66 Strathridge Grove, SW
Much sought after location, one of the best streets on the west side, backing west onto the ravine, 2500 s.f. 2-storey, 3 bdms & main floor den, plus walkout basement with newly developed wet bar, 4th bedroom & r.i. media room.

Strathcona \$675,000

57 Strathlea Grove, SW
Huge pie lot on child-friendly cul-de-sac, 2140 s.f. home + dev'd basement (almost 3000'), 3 + 1 bedrooms & den with French doors, vaulted bonus room, 2 f/p, Island kitchen, extensive hardwood & tile floors, Oversized double garage.

Springbank Links \$1,150,000

455 Rodeo Ridge, Springbank
Exceptional 2-stry with dev'd walkout, over 3500 s.f. in total, 3 + 1 bdms (master with sitting rm) + den, exceptional location backing onto treed ravine with river & city views, high-end finishing, curved staircase, mahogany floors, 1/4 acre lot.