



LIFE AT HOME

DECOR • DOMESTIC ARTS • RENOVATIONS • RENTALS • RESALE

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SATURDAY, JUNE 23, 2007

AROUND THE HOUSE



Bio-life line launched

PRODUCT • As more and more people try to do their bit for the environment, Life Brand has launched a new line of eco-friendly household cleaners.

Touted as being easy on the environment yet tough on cleaning, the biodegradable, non-toxic and phosphate-free product line includes the Ultra-Dish Soap, All-Purpose Surface Cleaner and Tub and Tile Soap Scum and Stain Remover. An infusion of essential oils makes for a pleasant, delicate scent with fragrances such as Mango Tangerine and Pear Violet.

Other household items are expected later.

All products sell exclusively at Shoppers Drug Mart and retail for \$3.99

— Calgary Herald

This just in, from design's frontline

ONLINE • Devoted design junkies don't wait for monthly shelter mags to arrive in their mailboxes. They get their daily decor fix by reading blogs.

These updated-daily sites also are great reads for anyone just starting to discover their own decorating style. Find trend forecasts, designer profiles, product launches and reviews, sale announcements and links to featured stores and merchandise along with practical decorating advice and inspirational eye candy. Reader insight and advice are welcome, creating a mix of design voices, resources and ideas from around the globe.

Among design blogs, Apartment Therapy (www.apartmenttherapy.com), about small spaces, and Design* Sponge (designsponge.blogspot.com) may be the most well-known, but here are some other favourites:

■ **Decor8**, decor8.blogspot.com, an Elle Decor favourite by a blogger in New Hampshire.

■ **Pigtown*Design**, pigtowndesign.blogspot.com, based in Baltimore.

■ **Design hole**, designhole.blogspot.com, based in Detroit.

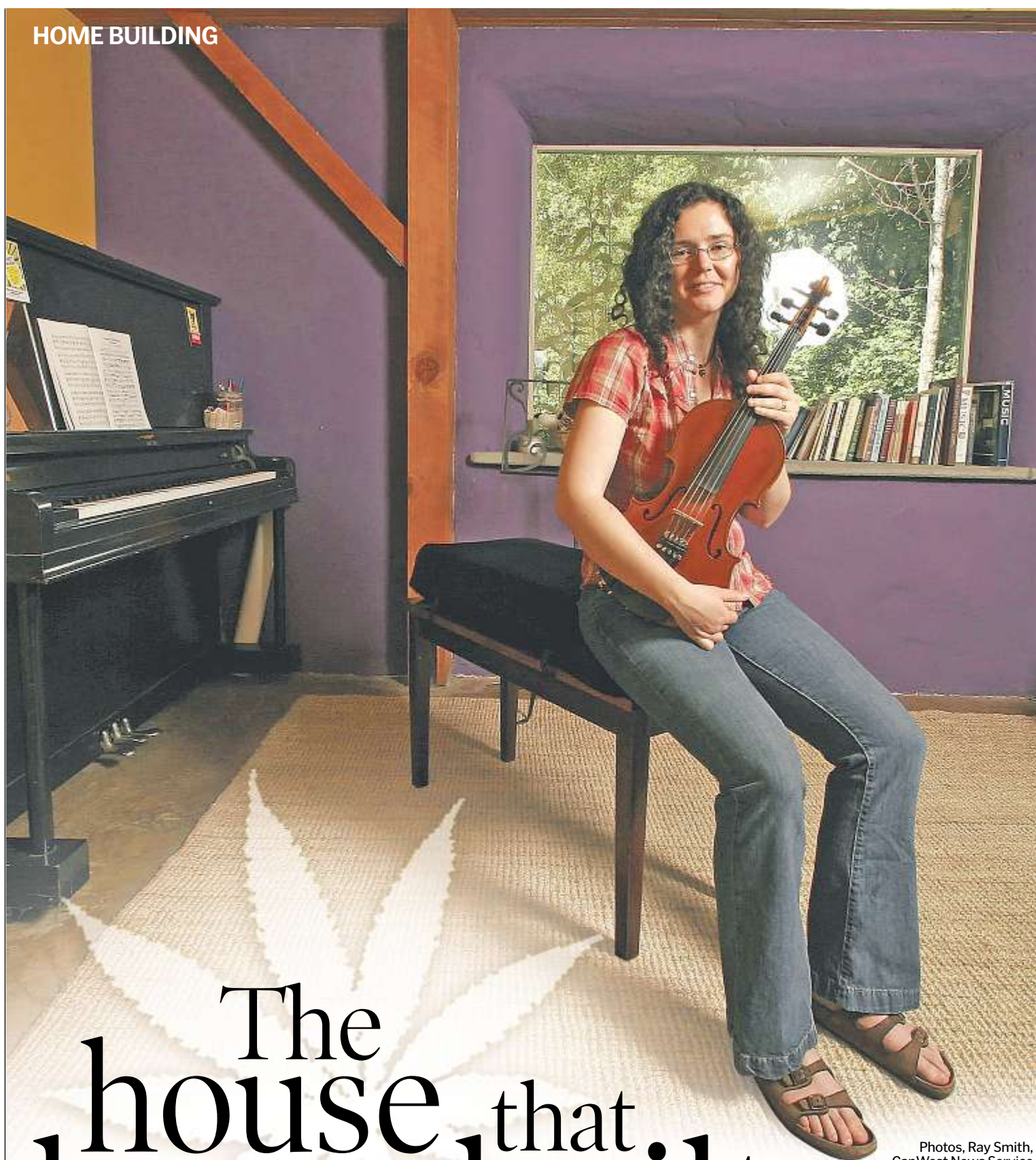
■ **Bloesem blog**, bloesem.blogspot.com, by a Dutch blogger.

■ **SF girl by bay**, sfgirlbybay.blogspot.com, from a self-described bohemian blogger based in San Francisco.

■ **Also online**: the new Tricks for Decorating Small Spaces photo gallery on the Domino magazine website, www.dominomag.com. Find 29 photos of tiny rooms with tips to make them feel, well, less tiny.

— The Washington Post

HOME BUILDING



Photos, Ray Smith, CanWest News Service

A professional musician, Jaime Rokeby-Thomas practises in her home studio, which is sound-proofed by bales of hemp.

The house that hemp built

Scarcity of straw bales leads couple to use tough cannabis fibres to fill their walls

JOANNE HATHERLY
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Drew and Jaime Rokeby-Thomas had the property, builder, designer and finances lined up for construction of their straw-bale home on B.C.'s Saltspring Island.

They had everything they needed — except straw.

Construction on the 1,760-square-foot house was to start in 2003, the same year Alberta's drought made headlines across the country. The couple found that Alberta farmers, unable to grow their own bedding for their livestock, had gone shopping in B.C. That meant regular straw-bale sources were sold out.



Homeowner Drew Rokeby-Thomas opens the "truth window" to reveal the hemp-bale construction of the home's walls.

"We started calling family and friends in the Kootenays looking everywhere and anywhere for straw," says Drew, an inventor. They never found it, but they did find a rancher with 2,000 hemp bales and snapped them up.

Building an alternative-style house can be a large-scale experiment. Each house built of alternative materials, such as earth and straw, needs to be

certified by an engineer to pass building inspection. The last-minute switch made by the Rokeby-Thomases threw new variables into their plans.

"Hemp was much harder to build with," says Drew. The difficulty was due to hemp's tougher fibre, making it harder to cut the bales. "I would never do a hemp house again."

But that minus has been compensated for by a big plus. While

straw-bale homes can sometimes run into trouble with moisture when not properly designed, the in-wall moisture reader on the Rokeby-Thomas house showed the hemp dropped its moisture content faster than straw-bale homes.

Everest Reynolds of Elevation Design Studio provided the basic house design. Builder Nick Langford, a building technology and design graduate from B.C. Institute of Technology, worked with the couple to fashion the two-level low-energy home. Timber-frame construction bears the load of the house, while the hemp bale walls on the main floor provide an insulating value of R30. Large windows run along the south side of the house, helping it to gain solar heat throughout the day.

The house is well-sealed, not only against the climate, but also against sound. Jaime is a professional musician whose stage name is jaime rt. Her music studio occupies the north side of the house. There, the walls were built with double-offset studs and gasketed doors so that Jaime's creative output wouldn't resonate through the house and neighbourhood.

SEE HEMP, PAGE G2

DECORATING

How to decorate and still keep your roommate

MELISSA DAHL
MCCATCHY NEWSPAPERS

Oh, the joys of living with roommates. They eat your food. They take your clothes. They borrow your car.

That's enough to deal with as a 20-something in your first grown-up place. But what if they want to decorate your pretty little home with stuff that's just... ugly?

Even if each roommate's taste in decor is radically different, experts say there are still ways to keep your place looking good — while keeping the peace.

"The No. 1 rule is to find roommates you know," says Krista Watterworth, host and designer for HGTV's "Save My Bath." She acknowledges that can't always happen. Still, it's important to evaluate how you'll get along with this person who'll be sharing your kitchen and bathroom. "When you meet someone, you know right away whether you're going to get along or not."

The safest route isn't always moving in with friends, says Susan Fee, author of *My Roommate Is Driving Me Crazy: Solve Conflicts, Set Boundaries, and Survive the College Roommate From Hell* (Adams Media Corp., \$9.95, 211 pages).

"You assume (your friends) will be just as reasonable as you are," Fee says. "So when you're living with strangers, you're more direct."

Before bringing even one piece of IKEA furniture into the apartment, it's important for all of the roommates to establish their vision for the common spaces of the house. Is the living room going to be a regular venue for parties or a place for quiet study?

Once everyone's expectations have been discussed, it helps to get that conversation in writing. "Have everybody sign a contract to respect each other," Watterworth suggests. Agree to compromise in decorating the common areas.

SEE ROOMIE, PAGE G2



Calgary Herald Archive
Roommates need to have a common decorating vision.

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HOUSE OF REAL ESTATE

Coach Hill \$329,000

7171 Coach Hill Rd, SW
Perfect for 1st time buyers, 1000 s.f., 2 bdrm townhouse, bright & open plan, single attached garage, sit outside to enjoy the large patio/greenspace, terrific complex, dogs allowed w/ approval from board, condo fee \$276, in-floor heat.

Park-like lot \$695,000

161 Wentworth Park, SW
Big pie lot, like your own private park, incredible landscaping with large pond & waterfall, bridge, heritage stone patios, deck, fire-pit & an aspen grove! 2000 s.f. 2-storey with fully developed basement, total 4 bdrms, quiet cul-de-sac location.

Townhouse \$559,000

#302, 10 Discovery Ridge Hill, SW
Stylish & spacious townhouse with double garage, over 1700 s.f. of luxurious living space, kit with granite counters, 3 bedrooms/3 baths, convenient location steps to coffee shop, wine & convenience stores, but siding onto tranquil greenbelt.

Walkout Bungalow \$799,000

148 Christie Park View, SW
Spacious brick bungalow with developed walkout basement, total of 3100 s.f. of development, 2 + 2 bedrooms, hardwood & slate floors, wet bar, granite counters, vaulted ceilings thru most of main lvl, walkout family room is open to main floor.

Bungalow with loft \$569,000

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

Facing the Park \$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 w/ developed walkout, 3500+ s.f., 1+2 bedrooms, home gym, fireplace on deck.

West Springs \$569,000

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.

On the Ravine \$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 bdrms & main floor den, plus walkout basement with newly developed wet bar, 4th bedroom & r.i. media room.

Huge lot \$650,000

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

See more of Sam's listings inside