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LIFE AT HOME

DECOR • DOMESTIC ARTS • RENOVATIONS • RENTALS • RESALE

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2007

AROUND THE HOUSE



Purple reigns

SEASONAL • Actually, it's deep violet set off with silver accents — or saturated chocolate teamed with splashes of turquoise, or warm cream hues that range from bone to mink ... that's according to the folks at HomeSense, who are stocking up with their fall and winter styles.

They've designed a Hemingway-esque bedroom with croc-print leather armchairs, birchbark candles and faux horn decorative bowls for a rich, sophisticated look without overdoing the outdoorsy theme often associated with the writer.

When it comes to winter, the designers have thought ahead, with violet-meets-metallic Christmas accessories (from decorative balls to mirrored ornaments) and a winter white featuring exotic prints that add warmth to the beige-on-cream background.

Fans of the store will know that stock can vary from week to week, but the lineup is tempting enough to warrant a few visits to see what's there, both at HomeSense and its sister store Winners.

For locations, check homesense.ca and winners.ca.

Christmas in the country

EVENT • It's early November, which means it's time for the "Christmas in the Country" art sale at Leighton Art Centre (the historic home of artists A.C. and Barbara Leighton), just outside Calgary.

With original unframed art from more than 60 artists plus crafts, live music and festive treats, it's more than a chance to shop.

The sale runs today and tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and is also on next Saturday (Nov. 10).

The Centre is 15 kilometres southwest of Calgary — you'll find easy-to-follow directions at leightoncentre.org or call (403) 931-3633.

Home heist shopping list

ONLINE SHOPPING • If you're hooked on Colin & Justin's Home Heist, you can now follow their lead.

Can't get enough of the damask bedding in the Tartan Terror episode? How about the cinnamon cowhide rug in Not Easy Being Green?

Surf on over to hgtv.ca and click on the episode you like. Along with a brief description of the Canadian decorating disaster that the boys solved, you'll find a shopping list. Although many of the stores are in Toronto, you'll find plenty that have a local profile (the rug came from EQ3 and the bedding from the Bay).

— Yvonne Jeffery, Calgary Herald

YVONNE JEFFERY
CALGARY HERALD

Lauren Mangion and Sarah Franklin are standing in the bathroom of Franklin's north-west Calgary home, staring at the bright blue water in the toilet bowl.

"What do I do?" asks Franklin, slightly horrified.

The blue hue to the otherwise clean water is the result of a dye tablet that Mangion, an environmental consultant, placed in the toilet tank half an hour ago and it means that water is sneakily leaking from the tank into the bowl.

"Usually it's just the seal that's not fitting properly in the tank," Mangion reassures Franklin. "But some of these undetected leaks can cost you 200,000 litres a year."

That can get expensive, both for the homeowner and the environment — but a quick adjustment of the plastic connector that stretches between the flush mechanism and the seal immediately slows the leak down.

With her green "guilt" factor inching up the scale, Franklin recently called on Mangion's Conscious Home eco-coaching service to help her find where she could improve.

"I do zero and most of the people I know do something," she says, explaining that recycling and other conservation efforts just weren't part of her childhood. Now, she wants to raise her

ECO COACHING

Confused about how to go greener at home? Calgary's eco-coaches can help

children with more concern for the environment.

She's horrified again when Mangion calculates her ecological footprint (the amount of land needed to sustain a person based on lifestyle factors such as home energy efficiency and transportation choices). It's 7.2 global hectares — well above the average Canadian footprint of 4, but less than the average Calgarian's footprint of 9.6.

"Calgary has the highest footprint of any Canadian municipality," notes Mangion, adding that Franklin's figure includes some of her family's costs, boosting it higher than Franklin really deserves. And to be fair, Franklin is doing more than she realizes: she and her husband chose energy-efficient appliances for their home, and their toilets are already low-flow.

Still, she'd like to reduce her footprint as much as possible.

"For a lot of people in Sarah's position, there's just so much information out there, and that's overwhelming," says

Mangion, explaining that her "in-home greening" service focuses on raising awareness and helping people connect with the environment.

The service costs \$300, and includes calculating your ecological footprint and the tonnes of carbon emissions that you're generating each year, and then going through your

home with you to uncover where you can go greener.

She'll check, for example, that you have low-flow toilets, water-conserving aerators on your faucets and low-flow showerheads. If you don't, her basket of goodies includes a water conservation kit with a starter supply of water conserving fixtures — along with environmentally friendly cleaning products (from Calgary-based Small Planet) and even a composter.

Mangion gives her clients detailed suggestions to follow after the coaching session, from recycling and composting to choosing local food and reducing packaging — but it doesn't all have to be done in a day.

SEE ECO-COACH,
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Lorraine Hjalte, Calgary Herald
Sarah Franklin, left, gets some advice from Lauren Mangion, an eco-coach.



The kirei alternative

Eco-friendly product offers new textures for cabinetry, panelling, even furniture



CanWest News Service
Kirei board is made from the stalks of sorghum plants.

DANIEL DROLET
FOR CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Haven't heard of kirei board yet? You're going to. This new product, made of recycled agricultural waste, is not only environmentally friendly, it's beautiful.

And that one-two combination is attracting architects, designers and decorators, who have begun incorporating it into furniture, cabinetry, panelling and, in rare cases, flooring.

Kirei board is made from the stalks of sorghum plants. Instead of being burned as agricultural waste, the stalks are heat-pressed into sheets with a non-toxic adhesive and can be used like wood (kireiusa.com).

The word kirei is Japanese, and means clean and beautiful. And it's the board's look more than anything else that first attracts attention.

"It's quite a beautiful product," says Rebecca Best, co-owner of The Healthiest Home, an Ottawa-based supplier of environmentally friendly construction materials. "It almost looks like you are looking at stalks of sorghum." It is also non-toxic.

"It has a tactile presence," adds Ottawa architect Christopher Simmonds, who used it in his kitchen. "When people see it, they are drawn to go and touch it. There's a textural look."

Despite the look, kirei board is smooth to the touch. Visual

interest is created because no two boards are alike: When you press stalks of sorghum together, they create random patterns of light and dark.

And although it can be finished to any colour, it is usually left as is. "It has quite a specific look of its own," says Best. "It looks like a painting or a map," says Simmonds.

In that respect, kirei board is like bamboo. But kirei is softer, and not a good choice for flooring except in low-traffic areas.

Its main uses are on vertical surfaces — particularly as panelling — and for furniture.

Simmonds has incorporated kirei board into panels in his kitchen cupboards. "The whole cupboard door is a flat slab of kirei board."

Best's company used kirei board at the offices of the Canada Green Building Council.

It costs \$10 to \$18 a square foot for panelling. "For bringing a beautiful product into your home, it's actually affordable," says Best.

Beauty aside, it's kirei's environmental credentials that have got people excited.

Toronto-based Octopus Products is a Canadian distributor of kirei board. Owner Tom Bernard says the board can help building projects gain LEED certification. (The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating system is a standard for evaluating environmental design.)

"Kirei board will allow a designer to earn points in four different categories," says Bernard. Still, the product remains relatively unknown. You won't find it in hardware stores.

Designers and architects — once they discover kirei board — are enthusiastic.

Simmonds discovered it almost by accident. "We got samples in the mail and said, 'Wow! It's lovely!'"

"It's got an organic quality to it," adds Bernard.

"It's not only sustainable, it's a healthy product," says Best. "It's a fabulous design alternative."

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