

## The Sensible Environmentalist

(NAPS)—DEAR DR. MOORE:  
**I'm designing a new home.  
Do you have any advice on  
building "green"?**

Building green can be interpreted in different ways. Green as a measure of environmental friendliness is what I'll focus on here.



Dr. Moore

Everything we do has an impact on the environment. Designing your own home, you have an opportunity to minimize your impact through energy efficiency and the use of renewable resources.

Wood, for example, is the only major building material that is renewable. Wood products also require less energy—from extraction through manufacturing—than concrete or steel, use less fossil fuels to make, produce less water and air pollution, and result in far lower emissions of greenhouse gases. A recent study comparing buildings designed using primarily wood, steel or concrete, found the concrete design required 70 percent more energy to build and the steel design 140 percent more energy to build than the wood option.

Once your home is built, there is an even greater opportunity to save energy through efficiency and the sources of energy used to heat and cool the home, provide hot water, power lights and run appliances.

For example, wood is a better insulator than other construction materials—8.5 times better than concrete and 400 times better than steel. A wood-framed home that is well-insulated and sealed stays naturally warmer in winter and cooler in summer, which translates into reduced energy consumption.

Install a high-efficiency furnace and Energy Star air conditioners and appliances, and use compact fluorescent light bulbs which consume less energy and last much longer. In some parts of the country, consumers can also choose to buy "green" energy produced by wind, hydro, and biomass (usually wood waste). The most environmentally friendly technology is the ground source heat pump that uses renewable earth energy from beneath your home to provide heat, air conditioning and hot water.

The more consumers seek out environmentally friendly designs, the more available and cost-effective they'll become. I believe a sensible environmentalist would, in building a new home, focus wherever possible on the use of wood, renewable energy and energy efficiency.

• *Dr. Patrick Moore has been a leader of the environmental movement for more than 30 years. A co-founder and former president of Greenpeace, he holds a Ph.D. in ecology and a BSc in forest biology. Questions can be sent to [Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com](mailto:Patrick@SensibleEnvironmental.com).*