

# The Green Life

A guide to living earth-friendly in the urban jungle



## BY JILLIAN BLUME

**E**arth Day began germinating as an idea back in 1962, when former Senator Gaylord Nelson became troubled that the environment was a non-issue in United States politics. The first Earth Day was held in 1970, and since then, this grassroots event has provided an opportunity to assess our environmental forecast.

While much of the country may perceive New York City as a smoggy island of environmental abuse, our city is surprisingly green. New Yorkers drive less and take public transportation more, we live in apartment buildings that by their nature take up smaller footprints, we recycle, and we buy organic.

On Earth Day 2007, Mayor Bloomberg announced PlaNYC, challenging New Yorkers to find ways to green our city by 2030. The plan's far-reaching goals include cleaning up the air, contaminated land, and our waterways, providing cleaner energy, improving public transportation, creating sustainable housing, reducing global warming emissions by more than 30%, and achieving the cleanest air quality of any other city in the United States.

But even before this plan was launched, the green movement has been gathering steam. In the last few years, "green" has become such a buzzword that a new concept has arisen from the marketing sector called "greenwashing." The more the green label is worth, the more companies jump on the bandwagon—but each has their own, often convenient, definition of what makes their product green. Greenwashing is a false claim about the environmental

benefits of a product.

"I think the biggest green issue is understanding what green is," says Steven Salsberg, Vice Chairman of the Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), "and making it attainable and measurable and thereby sustainable for other New Yorkers. Organizations like the CENYC and grassroots efforts in the business sector are seeking to identify attainable ways to become green."

While Salsberg focuses on helping small businesses become green, the CENYC has a number of programs that take center stage in terms of the lives of New Yorkers. One of these programs supports the city's greenmarkets. "The greenmarket program pays for all the other work that the Council on the Environment does, and they support farmers within a 300-mile radius of New York City," says Salsberg.

Another CENYC program, the Office of Recycling and Education, is charged with educating New Yorkers about recycling. It works to identify the specific challenges to recycling in a neighborhood and sets up special collection programs for textiles, electronics, and compost, which are often located in greenmarkets. The ReMix Campaign (Recycling Magazines is Excellent!) has reached out to large companies in an effort to reduce the 400,000 tons of magazines and newspapers that were ending up in landfills. Because of this campaign, the landfill consumption has been reduced by up to a quarter just by running ads and educating New Yorkers.

Green consciousness has been seeping into every industry, which makes it increasingly important to understand what "green" actually means. This issue of the Green

Observer takes a look at some of those industries and offers tips on how to realistically implement small changes that can have a big effect on the health of the planet.

## Fashion

When it comes to fashion in this difficult financial market, people are focusing on buying investment pieces that are timeless classics or one-of-a-kind works of wearable art. Green fashion fulfills both these requirements.

Loyale Clothing is a sustainable clothing company based in New York City. "We work almost exclusively with organic cotton because conventional cotton is so destructive to the environment and to the people who work with the cotton from the seeding to the mills where the cotton is woven into fabric," says Loyale's creative director and founder Jenny Hwa. "The simple act of getting dressed in the can be world-changing, and you can make a big difference by choosing one small element of the green movement that will fit into your lifestyle." Her company specializes in classic garments that will last for the next 10 or 20 years.

According to the Organic Trade Association, non-organic cotton production uses 25% of the world's insecticides and more than 10% of the pesticides. The Environmental Protection Agency considers seven of the top 15 pesticides used on cotton in 2000 in the United States as likely or known human carcinogens. "Conventional cotton not only pollutes the planet, but it



## The Art of Shade: made out of three recycled men's shirts.

also pollutes the person wearing the garment because cotton always retains some of those toxins," Hwa says.

The Art of Shade, based in Hollywood, Florida and available online, takes a different approach to green fashion. Designer Kayce Armstrong creates her line of eco-couture using recycled materials.

"My philosophy is to take things that we already have and to give them a new life," she says. "I can take three or four men's shirts and completely deconstruct them and make them into a beautiful gown." Her garments are one-of-a-kind creations that will never go out of style and are uniquely wearable.

She travels all over the world, visiting thrift shops and collecting clothes that have been thrown away. "We're about recycling and recreating things that people have discarded," Armstrong says. "My goal is to teach people that you can make something incredibly beautiful out of something that is used. Once we get a hold of it, it's not used anymore. It gets a new life."

## Automobiles

According to Clean Air NY, every gallon of gasoline your vehicle burns generates around 20 pounds of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. One of the most

important things people can do to reduce an individual's contribution to global warming is to buy a vehicle with higher fuel economy or an alternative fuel powered car.

What makes a car green is a combination of fuel efficiency, alternative fuels, and low emissions. Today's electric hybrid cars have been on the road for years, but technology has advanced in terms of alternative fuel to now include natural gas and hydrogen powered fuel cell cars, which both have zero emissions.

"The next generation of hydrogen powered fuel cell cars is the FCX Clarity," says Todd Mittleman, American Honda's Environmental and Safety Public Relations Administrator. "The advantage of a hydrogen-powered car is that the refueling time is five to seven minutes as opposed to hours for an electric vehicle."

Leo Motors, a company formed in 2005 by a team of automotive experts, specializes in electric cars, such as their sleek EVolution. "Until now, electric vehicles, or EVs, have traditionally suffered some serious limitations including performance obstacles such as high voltage control, long recharging time, and limited speed and range," says Dr. Robert Kang, Leo's CEO. "Zero emission fuel cell technology such as Leo's Zinc Air Fuel Cell promise to remedy these problems, allowing EVs to become fully sustainable vehicles."

Honda also has a natural gas powered vehicle, the Honda Civic GX, which has zero emissions and requires no gasoline. "We started selling it to individual customers in 2005, and we've doubled production this year to 2,000 units. So we have two pure alternative fuel vehicles."

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## Earth Day. Every Day.



Want to do more to protect our environment? It's simple, with Miele's Honeycomb Care™ laundry, an advanced cleaning system that uses significantly less water, less energy and less detergent. This laundry system is even built to a rigorous 20-year life design and all pieces are marked for recyclability. And where do you find such environmentally friendly appliances on display? Elgot, of course. Manhattan's premier kitchen & bath designers. For over 60 years, knowledgeable consumers have relied on Elgot for quality kitchen and bath design, major appliances, and expert installation.

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The Honda FCX Clarity: a hydrogen fuel cell car with zero emissions.

many beauty lines that are form and function, so they are beautiful to look at, they smell amazing, they're light on the earth and good for your skin," says Eva Chen, Teen Vogue's Beauty and Health Director.

Green skincare is a combination of organic ingredients and eco-friendly packaging. Ole Henriksen, an expert in natural skincare since 1975, began by mixing ingredients in his kitchen, and his line of products is based on essential oils extracted via a cold-pressed process to preserve the integrity of the active elements and natural antioxidants.

Factors that make skincare green, according to Henriksen, are that the ingredients are derived from nature, no harsh chemicals have been used in the extraction process, the aromas are from essential oils, and the preservative system has no parabens. "It is important for skincare to be green because the natural actives and essential fatty acids are part of nature, they are totally bio-degradable, and they don't pollute," he says. "It's a matter of committing yourself to keeping a cleaner and safer environment for all of us and about using things that also will render great results."

Eva Chen suggests choosing organic

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## The Highline Building at 450 West 14th Street

Located at 450 West 14th Street, the 100,000-square-foot Highline Building is expected to transform the Meatpacking District when it opens in the fall. The 15-story office building features a dramatic steel-framed glass tower atop an existing five-story Art Deco masonry building and is expected to achieve LEED Gold certification from the USGBC. "Green" features include low-VOC and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified finishes, as well as energy efficient lighting and water efficient plumbing.

Designed by Morris Adjmi Architects, the building features 87,000 square feet of office space on 11 floors and retail space at the base of the park's main entrance. Helmut Lang has leased two full floors of office and showroom space at the building, according to developer CB Developers.

The office space features soaring ceilings, world-class amenities and state-of-the-art technology, security and cooling systems. The upper floors offer dramatic panoramic views of the Hudson River and the historic Meatpacking District through floor-to-ceiling windows; its lower floors offer direct views of the High Line Park, which runs 103 feet through the building. Inquiries for office leasing should be directed to Newmark Knight Frank's Brian Waterman at 212-372-2299

The building also features 7,636 square feet of retail space with 70 feet of frontage along bustling West 14th Street. The dramatic space features soaring 23-foot ceilings, access to the park's main entrance, and the opportunity to be a part of the neighborhood's exciting retail landscape. Inquiries into retail leasing should be directed to Winick Realty Group's Kelly Gedinsky at 212-792-2637.



## Williamsburg Development with an Eco-friendly Edge

Buyers looking for a new residential development that offers incredible views, eco-friendly design, and a healthier, smarter lifestyle will be thrilled to discover The Edge, Brooklyn's most ambitious mixed-use waterfront development currently under construction and the largest project to date striving for LEED certification. Located along the East River in Williamsburg, the development offers more than luxury living; it's creating an improved way of life that will benefit homeowners for years to come.

Developed by Douglaston Development, The Edge is anchored by three distinctive condominium buildings on a reclaimed 7.5-acre site with over 60,000 square feet of retail space, below-grade parking, and approximately 1.75 acres of open space, including a public park with promenade and piers.

Phase One includes 565 residences in two residential towers, which are being readied for Fall 2009 occupancy. All of the eco-friendly homes, which range from studios to three-bedrooms, exceed the New York State energy conservation code by 15% and will incorporate energy-saving Miele and Bosch Energy Star appliances, filtered air, insulated walls and windows, no VOC-emitting interior finishes, and water-efficient fixtures.

The Edge's allure is further heightened by its 40,000-square-foot amenity space, which includes a year-round, open-air pool, fitness facilities, onsite spa, video game room, residents' lounge areas, and children's playroom, in addition to hybrid Zipcars.

The Developers Group serves as the exclusive sales and marketing firm. The Edge's Sales and Design Center is located directly across from the development at 135 Kent Avenue. For more information, contact 718-222-0211 or visit [www.williamsburgedge.com](http://www.williamsburgedge.com).



brands such as Jurlique or Pangea or Dr. Hauschka. "The more people demand products that are organic and eco-friendly, the more other brands will step-up and create more green products and become more socially conscious," says Chen. "In choosing an organic brand, you're encouraging other brands to walk the walk too."

Increasingly, luxury lines of eco-skincare are appearing on the shelves, including certified organic products from Stella McCartney and Intelligent Nutrients, which are not only free of parabens, and petrochemicals, but have packaging that is completely recyclable.

### Bedding

Considering how much time we spend in bed, the safety of our bedding can have an impact on our personal health and ultimately on the health of the planet. People are becoming progressively aware of the environment, and consequently, global retail sales of organic cotton home textile products and apparel reached an estimated \$3.2 billion in 2008, according to the Organic Cotton Market Report.

Organic cotton is either grown or processed in a way that's earth friendly. It is grown without artificial fertilizer or toxic ingredients, the soil must lay fallow for a minimum of three years so that there's nothing within the soil that contaminates the character of the cotton fiber, and the cotton is processed through facilities that are devoid of toxic chemicals. "It's an entire life cycle from seed to shelf in which harmful toxins have been removed," says Bob Hamilton of Welspun, a company that makes every category of home textile products.

Organic cotton used to be a fabric that

had a rougher feel than conventional cotton. Cotton is a fiber with different staple lengths or grades, which determine the softness. Short staple lengths make rough, low-end low thread count sheets and coarse towels, and extra-long staple lengths create the soft, luxurious Pima, Supima and Egyptian cotton.

"Those varieties were not previously available in organic, but in the last three to five years, the demand has increased, and there's far more of it being grown," says Hamilton. "The growing habits are far more sophisticated, the yields are better, and we can generate much finer yarns. We can deliver products every bit as good as the finest linens that have ever been historically made."

### Jewelry

Mining metal is one of the United States dirtiest industries. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the mining industry is the top toxic polluter in the country.



Made from recycled metal, these whimsy rings snap apart to change beads.

Each year, mines generate an amount of waste equivalent to nine times the trash produced in the entire country. To get the amount of gold or silver necessary to create the average ring, the mining process leaves behind 20 tons of industrial waste and 13 pounds of toxic emissions.

"The trend in jewelry to use recycled metal is sort of a whisper right now, and it's just beginning to gain momentum," says designer R.

Craig Whitten. He has just launched whimsy, a new collection of rings crafted from reclaimed sterling silver, gold, and gemstones. "We've been buying old, broken jewelry and silverware for well over a year now, and I found a way to use every bit of what we buy to make these rings," he says. "It's a small step, but a step in the right direction."

The rings hold collectible beads of blown glass and other materials from major bead manufacturers including Chamilia, Pandora, or Trollbeads. They snap apart, so the rings can be customized daily, and one ring can fill in for an entire collection, cutting down on the possibility of buying newly mined metals.

Prismera has a line of jewelry cut from stainless steel, an eco-friendly material created from recycled components. Steel is North America's most recycled material, and when new steel is produced, the by-products are also recycled. Another company that uses recycled metal exclusively is Alkemie Jewelry, a pioneer in the eco-jewelry field.

They started out working with bullet casings collected from shooting ranges, and their line now includes recycled sterling silver, gold, nickel, and copper.

### Spirits

It may be hard to believe that the alcohol industry can go green, but considering how much people go out and party, it's a viable green category. VeeV, an Açaí based drink, is made from the super antioxidant fruit from Brazil.

"Everyone's going to go out there and drink," says co-founder Carter Reum. "Is it healthy? Absolutely not. But it's better than the alternative because we designed the distillation process to preserve the flavor and efficacy of the fruit as much as possible."

They worked to set the bar in the alcohol industry in terms of being eco-friendly. A little over a year ago, the company hired a firm called Climate Clean, which audited their carbon footprint, and they became the only certified carbon neutral spirits company in the world. It helped them amplify some of their other initiatives, like wind power and eco-friendly packaging. The frosting method on the bottles use considerably less water than a traditional frosting method, the inks are all soy inks, the corrugated boxes and the hang tags are all post-consumer waste, and the PVC

caps are bio-degradable. "So everything from the product to the distillery, which runs on wind power, to our office space, which is a sustainable, completely organic environment, is eco-friendly," Reum says.

The company donates a dollar from every bottle they sell to the Sustainable Açaí Project. You don't think of the alcohol industry as being eco-friendly, says Reum. We wanted to create a venture that was equal parts entrepreneur and social entrepreneur. We live in a climate now where everyone can make a difference.

### Household Cleaners

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the average American home has 63 hazardous chemicals within arm's reach. Most of these chemicals are used to clean our houses.

"Many of the chemicals in household cleaning products are not only highly toxic, but will pollute the air in your home," says Jeffrey Hollender, President of Seventh Generation, a leader in the eco-friendly cleaning market. "The fragrances in household cleaners are synthetic and full of volatile organic compounds, which trigger asthma attacks. They also have chemicals like phthalates that are known to be extremely dangerous."

The label on cleaning products have warnings that tell you to use the product in a well-ventilated space, which is hard for New Yorkers who often don't have windows in their bathrooms. It will tell you not to use the product if you have asthma, a heart condition, allergies, or sensitive skin.

"What makes a household cleaning product green is that there aren't any of those warnings, the ingredients have to be proven to be safe, the chemicals should be vegetable based, and they should have no VOC's," Hollender says. Seventh Generation offers a label-reading guide that can be downloaded to your phone, and it allows you to check the ingredients on the label while you're shopping.

### Home Furnishing

Because we spend so much in our home or office, indoor air pollution is a serious problem, and the materials that we furnish our homes with can dramatically affect personal and global health. Eco-friendly home furnishings and products refer to products that are not harmful to the environment.

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## DESIGN • STYLE AFFORDABLE LUXURY

Spring is here, signaling a welcome burst of rejuvenation and energy. To celebrate BoConcept is launching a **NEW** collection in April with great new designs, colors and ideas to spruce up your home and shake off the winter blues. The new collection will be available in store from April and as an introductory offer will also include some great discounts for a limited time only. Visit us online or at your local store to check out all the offers.



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### The Visionaire Downtown Living Redefined

Ready for immediate occupancy, The Visionaire is the latest green residential development in Battery Park City from established developer The Albanese Organization and Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects and has been designed to achieve Platinum LEED® certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, making it the greenest building in the nation. The Visionaire offers residents an ultra-sustainable lifestyle that does not sacrifice high-end condominium living. Studio-to-four bedroom residences start at \$690,000.

This luxury community offers the latest in sustainable technology with innovative filtration systems for water and air, water recycling and energy-harvesting solar panels. Also incorporated are eco-friendly products such as paints and adhesives, renewable bamboo and Sub-Zero appliances. Amenities include a fitness center and spa, an indoor pool, two rooftop gardens with built in grills, a screening lounge with fireplace, a children's playroom with an aquarium overlooking the spacious lobby and onsite parking and bicycle storage.

There is a larger vision for sustainable living taking shape in this waterfront community as one-third of Battery Park City is dedicated to open space, creating a green oasis in Manhattan. Bike paths, parks, esplanades, recreational spaces and breathtaking waterfront views surround The Visionaire. Next fall, New York City's first entirely green school, PS 276M, serving pre-K through 8th grade, will open next door to The Visionaire, adding a welcomed and important element to the family friendly neighborhood. The Exclusive Sales and Marketing firm for the Visionaire is The Marketing Directors, Inc.



"If we're talking about furniture made from wood, we're talking about either reclaimed wood or wood that comes from sustainably managed forests," says Linda O'Keeffe, Creative Director at Metropolitan Home. "In terms of paint, choose a brand that has low or no VOC's (Volatile Organic Compounds). Besides it's toxic effect on people, VOC's are a source of greenhouse gases as well. The process of making and coloring fabrics should have an awareness of the environment. It's not just the material itself, but you also have to consider what goes into the production of the product too."

Often furniture made from sustainable wood and organic fabrics tends to be pricey, but it's generally built to last and timeless in design. Environment is an example of a company that uses sustainable woods and materials with low environmental impact. Many other eco-designers are available at stores such as ABC Carpet and Home.

### Lighting

Since our buildings use such a large percentage of the electricity produced, energy-saving products are essential. One of the easiest ways to make a change is in your lighting. "A compact fluorescent uses 1/10 of the energy of an incandescent bulb and also lasts longer, so you're using less material and less energy," says Green Depot retail buyer Warren Fox-Jackson.

Among the most energy efficient bulbs are LED bulbs that use 1.7 watts—which are equivalent in terms of brightness to a 40-watt bulb—and they can last up to five years. "The biggest reason to consider green lighting is the amount of energy that you're saving," says Fox-Jackson. "By using less electricity, you're using fewer natural resources to produce that electricity. That means less harmful pollutants pumped into our environment. So on a couple of different levels, you can do a lot by changing your light bulb."



### Buildings

According to Phil Dordai, a sustainable design leader and a principal in the Global Education Studio, our buildings are the most important environmental factor in the United States. "As a country, our buildings use 35% of the primary energy we produce in this country, and they use 70% of the electricity that we generate," he says. "So if we're going to improve the environment, have a more energy efficient economy, and reduce our consumption of fossil fuels, we need to fundamentally change the way we design buildings today because the buildings that we design today are going to be around for a long time."

He defines sustainable design as people, planet, and profit. The people part is the materials used inside buildings, the planet part is about resources, and the profit side is that in order to make a building green, there has to be a sound economic basis. "What's interesting is that if you simply use some new technologies and new building control systems, you can easily save 30% of the

energy used in that building," Dordai says.

Horizon Engineering Associates is a company that examines the way that facilities run and operate and try to improve them. According to Michael

English, Founder and Senior Partner, five elements go into making a building green: location of the site, water conservation, energy conservation, materials, and indoor environmental quality. "A lot of the buildings around Manhattan really haven't been energy conscious, and if some of them have, it's not to the level that we're moving toward in today's market," he says.

Environmentally-friendly elements his company monitors include a small footprint, low-water use appliances such as infrared sensors on sinks so they don't stay on long, materials with low VOCs, energy efficient heating and cooling systems, and lights with occupancy sensors so that when people leave a room, the lights go off.

Most of the buildings that are being constructed today are green buildings. "Today's buyer wants to know that they're doing all that they can to save the environment," says Steve Kliegerman, executive director of Halstead Property Development Marketing whose portfolio of green buildings includes the Kalahari in Harlem and the Toren in Brooklyn. Green elements, he says, include green materials such as bamboo flooring, green roofs and windows glazed with a high UV rating that help keep rooms warm or cool and cut down on energy consumption, water filtration systems, and energy-efficient lighting.

Battery Park's Riverhouse was developed by the Sheldrake Organization and completed in 2008. Designed by David Rockwell, it pushes the green envelope with solar energy panels that have photovoltaic cells, which automatically follow the sun's trajectory and convert sunlight into clean energy.

"There's an interesting program out there, The 2030 Challenge, which the American Institute of Architects have developed," says Dordai. "It says that we need to be designing carbon neutral buildings by the year 2030. It's very ambitious, but if we're going to deal with the issues of global warming and creating a more sustainable and independent energy economy, we have to reach for this kind of ambitious goal."



Riverhouse has solar panels and river views.

## THE EARTH INSTITUTE COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

### Columbia

Columbia University has a whole spectrum of environmental and sustainable development programs. Columbia provides unique programs at the undergraduate, graduate and doctoral levels that successfully prepare students for future endeavors from environmental consulting to sustainable development.

Columbia University's Earth Institute offers a variety of student resources including listings of funding opportunities, student groups and organizations, related coursework, and recent news. There are over 29 academic programs that are affiliated with the Earth Institute representing one of the largest collections of environmental education programs in the world from degree programs to summer and certificate programs.

The innovative new Undergraduate Special Concentration in Sustainable Development is designed to provide Columbia students with an understanding of both the theory and practice of sustainable development. The MPA in Environmental Science

and Policy at the School of International and Public Affairs is an intensive 12-month program integrating environmental science with policy analysis and management principles. The MPA degree in Development Practice trains aspiring practitioners to understand and manage integrated approaches to sustainable development.

The Center for Environmental Research and Conservation (CERC) Certificate in Conservation Biology offers a unique opportunity to study with conservation experts through evening courses. Students earning the certificate gain a foundation in conservation science and policy. Our summer programs include a field program for undergraduate and graduate students.

You can learn more about the various programs that address environmental and sustainable development issues by going to [earth.columbia.edu](http://earth.columbia.edu) and clicking on the 'Education' tab or by contacting the Earth Institute's Office of Academic and Research Programs at 212-854-3142 or by email at [ei-students@ei.columbia.edu](mailto:ei-students@ei.columbia.edu).

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