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Paint your Home Green

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Author: [Peirs Morgan](#)

Publishing date: 12.01.2008 17:46

What you need to know about the dangers of paint and what the alternatives are.

We all have an Eco "I wish" list: re-cycle more, reduce the family's carbon footprint and behave responsibly but it can be difficult, or worse, expensive, to do so sometimes.

Well, having your home decorated no longer needs to be on your eco "I wish" list. Farnham-based decorating firm Go-Green Decorators offers the first high quality decorating service we have come across that guarantees to reduce your home's carbon footprint by using only 'natural' eco-friendly paints.

We asked Go-Green's Piers Warburton to give us a "science bit" about normal paints vs the eco-friendly ranges he uses...

How it all started

"Go-Green started with my wife (an interior designer) wanting to decorate our house with child-friendly paint – partly to be green and partly to avoid having to move out while the work was going on. After some research I found excellent paint ranges, of high quality and great colours and the house ended up looking great. Many of our friends asked me to source the paint (and reliable painters) and the business was born.

Two years on and we can guarantee the paint ranges we use all have EU Green certification and are produced by well-established manufacturers who can prove their environmental credentials and still manage to offer the colours - and quality - modern consumers want but at reasonable prices. Importantly, they are also 100% safe for those with allergies and asthma – often a concern for parents of young children.

As for the environmental credentials here is a great fact – using eco-friendly paint guarantees to reduce your household's carbon footprint by 30kg per year and, in fact, some of the paints we use emit less carbon than a block of wood!! Here is a less uplifting fact... did you know that the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rates "normal" paint amongst its top Household Hazardous Wastes and sources of indoor air pollution?

Health issues

So, what are the health issues around "normal" paint and why should you use 'natural'/eco-friendly paints?

the impact of petrochemical solvents and VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) on the environment

carcinogenic properties of many petrochemical based paints

increasing incidence of allergies and asthma

sick building syndrome arising from high levels of chemical compounds within buildings.

Many people are unaware that most modern chemical paints continue to give off potentially harmful gases years after application. For the increasing numbers of us who like to take care of our health, eating well and exercising, it can be a sobering thought that our living environment – the rooms in which we live, work and sleep – are coated in modern chemical paints...effectively, like living in a series of plastic bags.

Why aren't the dangers known?

There is a simple reason for these dangers being less well known: labelling legislation makes special provision for paints, in many cases removing the requirement for the well recognised hazard symbols. This should not be interpreted as meaning that paints are less hazardous than other products that do carry such labels.

Additionally, there is no legal requirement for paint labels to include a list of ingredients. We believe consumers should be able to make informed choices so all our product choices carry a full declaration of ingredients.

To be fair, it is not the petro-chemicals that are the problem in paint – but the VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds). It is widely accepted that VOCs contribute to global warming and are seriously detrimental to health. VOCs can be found in all sorts of products. In the paint industry, for example, they are widely used as solvents in oil based gloss and eggshell paints and in most water based paints, giving them their distinctive smell. Modern chemical paints also contain other potentially harmful constituents, such as acrylic softeners.

The new VOC in Paints Regulations 2005 (effective from 1 January 2006) set maximum levels for VOC content in most paints and require labels to include a declaration of VOC content. As you would expect the materials we use are totally free of VOCs and acrylic softeners.

Other benefits

Another major concern for parents of young children is aggravation of allergies and asthma by chemical paint. The paints we use help in several ways...

careful ingredient selection that relies on natural ingredients

the breathability of our wall paints helps even out the humidity in a room, making for a healthier living environment

some of the clay-based paints we use emit negative ions; higher ambient levels of negative ions are widely accepted as being beneficial to health and well being, especially for allergy and asthma sufferers

claypaint's high clay content helps to destroy airborne odours and contaminants.

That's the science bit...on a practical note the paints we use are just as durable as normal paint, they can also be applied straight onto brand new plaster or, just as simply over existing vinyl paintwork - meaning there is no expensive preparation needed.

Go Green Decorators provide an eco-friendly painting and decorating service. For a free consultation and quote please call 0787 949 6763

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