

PREMIERE  
ISSUE!

# fresh HOME

Easy Ideas For Hands-On People

**317** WAYS TO  
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Your Home

PERFECT  
**Color**  
COMBOS

**15** FUN & FRUGAL  
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# Eco-Paints

Get the skinny behind the hottest items in your local paint department

**What Are They?** Environmentally-friendly paints contain low—and in some cases no—volatile organic compounds, chemicals proven to be harmful both to people and the environment. While VOC-heavy solvents were once considered necessary for making paint that performs well, manufacturers are finding ways to limit or replace their usage.

**The Upside** VOC-heavy paints are major contributors to indoor pollution and are believed to contribute to asthma, respiratory problems, nausea, dizziness and cancer. Low- or no-VOC paints are low odor, environmentally safe, washable and tintable, making their color range identical to conventional paints.

**The Downside** The “hide factor”—how many coats it takes to densely cover a wall—is often not as strong as it is with standard latex or oil paints. Tinting low- or no-VOC paints may result in an inadvertent increase in VOCs, unless the tints themselves are no- or low-VOC. And of course, there’s the price: most low- or no-VOC paints cost substantially more than their conventional counterparts.

**Not Created Equal** The EPA has not yet set mandatory standards for VOC levels in paint, so some brands claiming to be green actually have higher levels of VOCs than others making the same claim. For interior paint of any kind, the EPA allows 250 grams of VOCs per liter. The Green Seal organization, an independent nonprofit group that sets standards for “green products,” only allows 50 to 100 grams per liter. If you’re really going green, find a paint with 5 to 10 grams of VOC per liter. If you want to go lower than that, you’ll need nontoxic or natural paint, which is harder to find and even pricier than low-VOC paint.

**The New Breed** Look to alternative paint companies for nontoxic or natural paints, containing all-natural, often raw ingredients like plant oils and dyes, natural minerals and bee’s wax. Be prepared for noticeable performance difference in terms of coverage and flow off the brush, but if you’re really after green, this is the way to go.

**Our favorite of the new crop?** Low-VOC ceramic paint that contains ceramic beads. It can withstand scrubbing and protects against the growth of mold, mildew and bacteria, making it ideal for bathrooms, the nursery and the kitchen.

## Smart Choices

Pristine Eco Spec Paint  
BENJAMIN MOORE

Harmony Paint  
SHERWIN-WILLIAMS

Pure Performance Paints  
PITTSBURGH PAINTS

Ceramic Coat  
O’LEARY PAINT

Freshaire Choice Paint  
HOME DEPOT