

Green is going mainstream



By Samantha Nelson
Downers Grove Reporter
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Downers Grove, IL -

A garden is growing on the roof of Downers Grove resident Lois Vitt Sale's garage.

Flowers, blooming in red, yellow, white and violet, drink in rain and cool the roof. It is just one of many ways Vitt

Sale has made her home environmentally friendly.

Green roofs are still rare, but Vitt Sale said awareness and interest in green building is growing. Principal of the Downers Grove-based sustainable design firm Phoenix Architects, she said her business has been growing rapidly.

"It's about time," she said. "If you look at the developments, all the construction going on in Downers Grove. The loss of open space, it takes a toll on us. Access to nature is a big issue. If we learn how to use our resources more wisely, why wouldn't you do it?"

Green architecture is taking root, not only for home construction, but for public buildings like the Lyman Woods Interpretive Center. The Downers Grove Park District building features a green roof and rain barrels to catch storm water. According to Shannon Forsythe, manager of the Park District's natural resources and interpretive services, it also uses recycled building materials, energy efficient lighting and water conserving fixtures.

The biggest issue is getting the word out on eco-friendly building, said Downers Grove resident Bill Styczynski, an architect with the Willowbrook based Styczynski, Walker and Associates, who is using the construction of his own home to demonstrate different green techniques. On Tuesday, more than 50 people came out to see his progress and hear speakers discuss the merits of replacing fiberglass with cellulose, insulation made from recycled newspapers.

Getting a return on an such a high investment is a challenge. Styczynski said he spent an additional \$8,000 to \$10,000 to outfit his 4,200-square-foot home with cellulose and triple-glazed windows to regulate internal temperatures. He spent about \$6,000 to upgrade to a more energy efficient furnace.

But as a result, Styczynski only needed one furnace for the entire home, saving about \$15,000. He expects to save about 40 percent on his heating and cooling bills. Cellulose has been around since the 1930s, seeing a burst of popularity during the 1970s before fading away again.

Now that energy costs are soaring, more people are looking to green solutions.

After driving large, gas-guzzling SUVs for years, Hinsdale resident Lane Ann Maillet and her family decided it was time for

Go green to save green

These eco-friendly measures are likely to reduce your bills over the long term, and making these changes is relatively simple.

Install a programmable thermostat

It adjusts your home's temperature settings automatically, allowing you to save energy while you're away or sleeping. According to the Energy Department, typical consumers save about \$150 a year. The purchase prices range from \$29 to \$99 at Lowe's home stores.

Change your light bulbs

Compact florescent bulbs

a change. They started looking into hybrids two years ago, and after some investigation, they purchased two Honda Priuses. Lane Ann uses her hybrid mostly for errands and shorter trips and gets between 35 and 38 miles per gallon. Her daughter, Michelle, uses hers for longer highway trips, as well as errands, and gets about 42 miles per gallon.

"I personally like that it's better for the environment, and it's cheaper," Michelle said.

The car's small computer screen displays an energy monitor, showing how much gasoline is being used compared to battery power.

"You always go back to the gas savings," Lane Ann said. "I can't imagine the hundreds of dollars we've saved in gas purchases. We'll continue to purchase some sort of hybrid from now on."

Michelle said she thinks the hybrid trend relates to a growing environmental awareness.

"I think people are finally realizing that we don't have an indefinite supply of fuel and oil," she said. "Anything we can do to help the environment will benefit, and even the smallest things can add up."

While Styczynski believes the industry still has to be more proactive in promoting green techniques, he said they have come to the forefront.

"It's definitely become much more prevalent than it's ever been," he said. "All the talk about global warming and those issues have made people more aware. Whenever you see a jump in energy costs, you see a renewed business in doing energy efficient housing."

Staff writer Sarah Koci contributed to this story.

last about 10 times longer than regular bulbs and use about 75 percent less energy, saving the average homeowner about \$26 in energy bills over the bulb's lifetime. The florescent bulb emits less nitrogen oxide, carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide.

Bike to work

Well, not if you don't have a place to clean up. But for many other day-to-day activities, leave your car in the garage and use your bike to run errands or visit nearby friends. It's a double bonus — getting exercise and not paying \$3.50 a gallon for gasoline.

Buy a new shower head

For less than \$20, you can create a low-flow, high-pressure shower that results in water savings of 25 percent to 60 percent a year, according to the Energy Department.

Do landscaping

Solar-powered decorative lights don't need a connection to your home's electrical system. You can get a four-pack at Home Depot for less than \$30. Also, you can reduce water runoff by creating rain gardens and using permeable pavers instead of concrete or asphalt.

Reuse old bags

Plastic grocery bags make effective garbage-can liners or lunch bags. Also, they can be used instead of bubble wrap when mailing packages.

Head for the minors

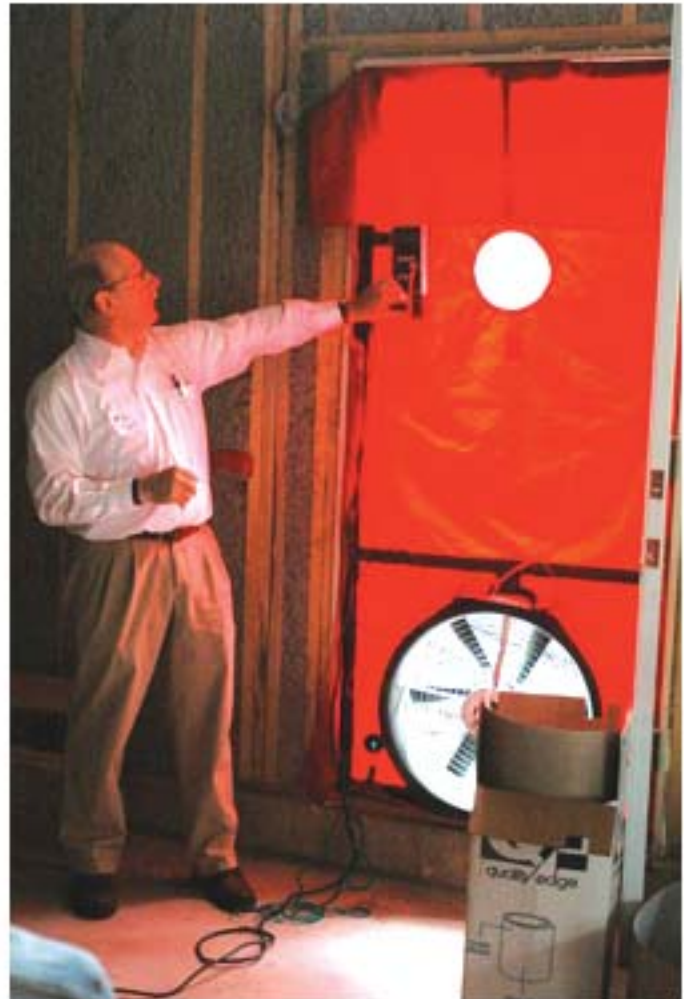
Forget seeing the Cubs or White Sox. (They're on TV,



anyway.) Instead of driving into Chicago, you'll probably save on gas — and ticket prices — by going to a minor-league game in Geneva, Crestwood, Joliet or Schaumburg.

Get new appliances

OK, so this isn't all that simple. But by replacing your older appliances with Energy Star models that use up to 50 percent less energy and water, you'll save roughly \$80 a year. Of course, your break-even point might take a few years.



Architect Bill Styczynski is building an energy efficient home and through his efforts he decided to invite other area builders to tour his house to share his green secrets. Above: Craig Matteson with Arc Insulation shows how fire retardent the cellulose insulation is by melting a penny on top of the insulation Tuesday at the energy efficient home being built. Right: Jim Cavallo demonstrates how a blower door is used to test how much air leakage a house has at an ennergy efficient home being built Tuesday.