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'I WANT A BEAUTIFUL HOUSE BUT WITHOUT MAKING AN IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT'

Words: KATE PARKIN Photography: ANDREW BOYD

Top TV designer Oliver Heath first hit our screens on BBC's Homefront, later winning the BBC Homefront Young Designer of the Year Award in 1998. He has gone on to become one of the UK's best-known designers, regularly appearing on BBC Changing Rooms. He recently invited us to have a nose around his mid-Victorian house in Brighton and gave us some great tips on going eco...

KITCHEN

'When it came to decorating my own home, I spent quite a lot of time thinking about what I wanted to achieve. As a result, I've definitely approached this project with the ethos of "how do I want to live?" rather than simply "how do I want my house to look?" Obviously I want a comfortable home, but I do believe it's possible to have both a convenient and stylish house without putting even greater demands on the environment.

One of the major elements for me was to ensure all the materials I used within the house came from sustainable or well-managed sources. I also think it's really important to try and cut out as many toxic elements as possible from within your home. My kitchen units, for example, are made from ZF MDF, which means zero formaldehyde has been used in the fabrication of the MDF. People aren't always aware of the fact that formaldehyde is used to produce lots of building materials and its dangerous emissions can often leak into homes.

Another way to make your home more eco-friendly is by using solvent-free paints. The eggshell I've used on the top units is from a company called ECOS; their organic paints are particularly good if you suffer from asthma or allergies. It does cost a little more unfortunately, but I would rather pay for the reassurance of knowing my health isn't at risk!

One of my favourite features are the kitchen worksurfaces that run through into the living room. Made to order by a company called Eight Inch, they actually consist of 85% crushed recycled glass and, as a personal touch, you can even choose your own composition to create a colourful and durable surface. I think they work really well with the oak cladding along the front of the units - sourced from a sustainable forestry supplier of course! >



READER TIP MARION SUMNER Ormskirk, Lancashire

'To clean dried paint brushes without using a harmful astringent, allow them to stand in simmering white wine vinegar for 10 minutes, then rinse through and start decorating again'

ABOVE Oak cladding along Oliver's kitchen units looks stunning and is produced locally from a sustainable forestry source

RIGHT For a unique piece of furniture it can be worth taking time to find more unusual products and creating something tailor-made for your home. Here Oliver has teamed a cast-iron base from a second-hand furniture shop with a recycled plastic tabletop. It has the appearance of marble but it's actually made from recycled food containers which are heat-pressed into a sheet and polished



KATE PARKIN Homes Editor

'Compress cans in Lakeland Ltd's compressor (£5.50) and you'll be able to take even more to the recycling bank.'



ALEX TOSO
Homes Assistant

'My favourite eco-friendly home accessory is a photo frame that's made from an oil drum (£7.50) at re-foundobjects.com.'

BATHROOM

'I love living in Brighton and wanted to reflect aspects of this in here. The stone floor is the main feature and it's really evocative of Brighton's beach. If you fancy a similar look, make sure you check the pebbles have come from a sustainable source.

The bathroom is one of those rooms where we could all make a difference to the environment. As we all know, showers use a great deal less water than a bath. In fact, water consumption was a major consideration when I was choosing the fixtures: my basin is quite compact and the toilet has a dual-purpose flush to reduce unnecessary use of water.

Lighting is a key element throughout the house and I've used both low-energy and low-wattage bulbs. In the bathroom I've also installed an infrared sensor that triggers fibre-optic lights; it means I don't get blinded by bright light when I walk in here during the night. Creative lighting makes all the difference to the atmosphere of a room and can use less electricity than you might think. Just don't forget to turn them off when you leave!



ABOVE RIGHT This great block of oak was bought from the local timber yard and is the ideal companion for the more compact basin

RIGHT The dramatic stone flooring pays homage to Brighton's pebble beach, a great match with the clean white porcelain and slate-grey mosaic tiles



LISA McFARLANE Acting Editor

'If you're overrun with plastic bags, you'll be less likely to reuse them, so invest in Ikea's bag dispenser for just £1.25.'

USEFUL ADDRESSES

● **RECYCLE NOW**
National campaign to get people to recycle more stuff, more often.
www.recyclenow.com

● **SMILE PLASTICS**
Suppliers of sheets of recycled plastic.
01743-850267 or www.smile-plastics.co.uk

● **GREEN BOTTLE UNIT**
Recycled glass tiles.
020-7241 7487 or www.green-bottle.co.uk

● **EIGHT INCH**
Produces recycled crushed-glass surfaces.
020-7503 3400 or www.eightinch.co.uk

● **EARTHBOEN PAINTS**
Environmentally friendly paints.
01928-734171 or www.earthbornpaints.co.uk

● **B&Q**
Stocks wood from sustainable forestry approved by the Forest Stewardship Council.
0845-850 0175 or visit www.diy.com

● **THE NATURAL COLLECTION**
Green and ethically traded goods.
0870-331 3333 or www.thenaturalcollection.com