



Eco-friendly home

by Brad Thompson

It's all in the stars when it comes to green houses.

The typical Queensland home generates 11 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year. That's the equivalent of operating two cars. In recent years, an escalating reliance on air-conditioners and other household appliances has increased energy consumption by an average of 10 per cent per year.

A key initiative for the federal and state governments is the energy rating of a house, and since 2003 houses built in Queensland must have achieved a minimum energy equivalent rating of 3.5 to four stars. However, from 2009, government regulations require all new houses and renovations be built to a five-star (out of 10) energy equivalent rating.

Sustainable homes are designed to take advantage of environmental and site constraints to minimise outside energy-input requirements. Elements taken into consideration include:

Orientation

Northern orientation for living rooms, with low-use rooms (garages, bathrooms and laundry) facing west.

Building shell

Roof ventilation and insulation for ceilings, walls and flooring. Use light colours for roof and walls. Glaze windows and seal floors. Attach outdoor rooms to an internal living area. Use eaves and awnings for shade.

Ventilation

Natural ventilation via windows and doorways; ceiling fans and whirlybirds are excellent alternatives to air conditioning. Along with the use of solar and water collection devices and renewable materials these all form the fundamental components to reduce negative environmental impact.

Brad Thompson is a qualified builder with a diploma in environmental management.

Quick DIY tips:

Every renovator wants to do the job in the most cost-effective way, and the one area many try to scrimp on is the painting. After all, how hard can it be to grab a brush, crack a paint can and start covering the walls with lashings of glorious colour? But just as you start feeling great about the dollars you're saving, things start to go wrong. Before you begin, here are few quick DIY tips to keep you out of trouble.

- Paint for purpose: Use mould-resistant paints for bathrooms, wash-and-wears for living areas and durable acrylics for exteriors.

- Buy the best tools: Getting the best brushes and rollers you can afford will make the job easier.
- Keep it clean: Lay canvas drop sheets or old bed sheets over furniture and floors to prevent accidents.
- Prepare: All surfaces should be sanded, cleaned and thoroughly dried before you start.
- Follow the painting sequence: 1) clean and sand surfaces, 2) paint all interior woodwork, 3) paint the ceiling by first cutting in the edges and rolling the rest, 4) paint one wall at a time by cutting in then rolling.

