

Build

Are You Keen to Be Green?

Log homes are natural, but are they “green?” We asked three experts.

Q: What constitutes a “green” home? The materials used, or are there specific design elements?

U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC):

We define a green home as healthy, comfortable, durable, energy efficient and environmentally responsible. This incorporates everything from the materials and systems used in construction to site orientation with respect to passive solar design.

Zac Guy, president, Appalachian Antique Hardwoods: With respect to design, my clients are building smaller-footprint homes. You don’t have to heat and cool that big house or clean it, and fewer building materials go into it.

David Mann, vice president, Alta Log Homes: Finding the right piece of land is

important so you’re not cutting down a lot of trees. Other factors include the way you do your driveway—a solid blacktop surface is not as environmentally friendly—and landscaping with local plants.

Q: What are the best sustainable materials log-home owners can use?

USGBC: Local (sourced, processed and manufactured within 500 miles), reclaimed, rapidly renewable and recycled products are all great.

Mann: We have bamboo flooring; it’s environmentally friendly, but it’s still coming from China, so there are trade-offs. In terms of countertops, granite will pass muster, but we’ve had people look at recycled glass or formed-on-site concrete.

Q: How does reclaimed wood come into play?

USGBC: It reduces the need to cut down trees and thereby decreases the need for processing and energy consumption involved in harvesting and transporting newly extracted trees.

Guy: What attracts a lot of people to what we do with reclaimed materials is not only the eco aspect, but also the textures, the history. We’re using cutting-edge technology to get the best use out of a precious resource, and that resource is in its second, third or fourth use.

Q: What are some of the most efficient home systems available for water, electricity and air circulation?

USGBC: A plumbing or water distribution manifold is a great way to increase the efficiency of distribution of hot water throughout the home. On-demand water heaters dramatically reduce the need to run the water before the desired temperature attained. Energy-recovery ventilators (ERV) and heat-recovery ventilators (HRV) help to reduce the energy consumption involved in conditioning fresh outdoor air. In mild climates with low humidity, incorporating a whole house fan is a very easy and cost-effective solution. In areas with high humidity, solutions that address moisture control need to be utilized so that mold and mildew do not infiltrate the home.

Guy: We’re seeing more incorporation of solar panels, rainwater collection, creative plumbing solutions using gray water to flush toilets, and backup generators.

Mann: A Munchkin boiler system is an environmentally friendly way to heat a home. An Energy Star lighting package is designed to accept only fluorescent bulbs. We’ve been working with the Humidex ven-



Despite the popularity of cathedral ceilings in today’s log homes, some homeowners prefer lower ceilings in smaller spaces to make them feel cozier.

tilation system; you put it in a basement, and it sucks air through the house and out. A solar panel can pre-heat water, so you use less energy to heat it.

Q: Because of the material used to construct them, would you consider log homes sustainable structures?

USGBC: Using reclaimed wood to construct one would definitely contribute to the sustainability of log homes.

Mann: Logs are a natural, renewable resource. Most of the wood going into log houses is being reforested. And whatever little waste we have from the manufacturer of the product is used for fuel or farm bedding.

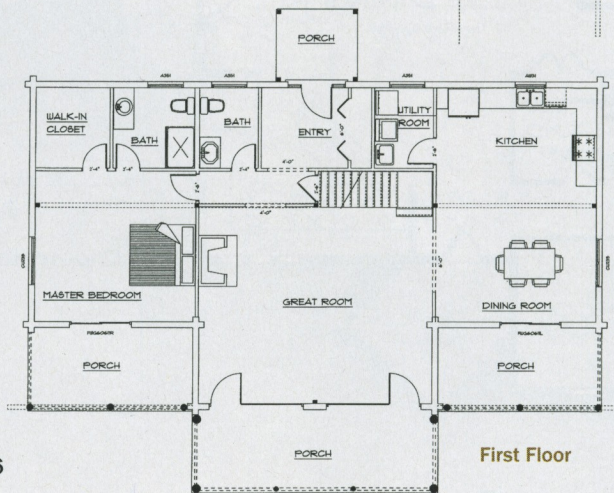
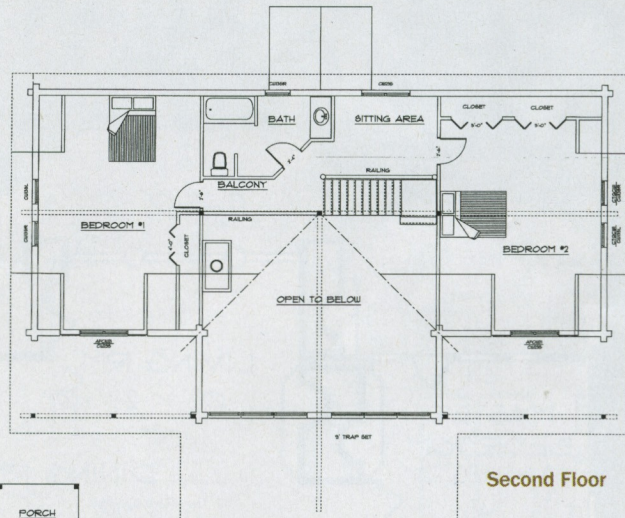


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Designer Series #8

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