

5 Quick Tips for a More Sustainable Home

A high-level view of designing a more sustainable home

THE
HOME
GREEN

The Author



HELLO THERE! I'M AMY.

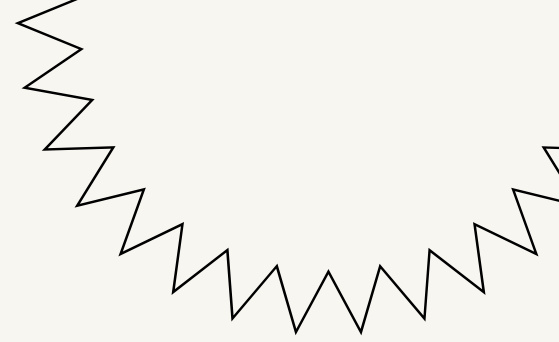
Like most women my age, I wear many hats: mother, wife, professional. When I'm done with the daily have-tos, I most enjoy being outside and devouring home decoration magazines, blogs, and books. I didn't start out with any special qualifications or even a particularly above-average track record of green living, but I've spent the past 2 years in deep learning mode and am excited to share what I've discovered.

In this e-book, I'm sharing high-level, quick tips designed to get you thinking about how sustainability can factor into designing your home. If you enjoy this, or are looking for more in-depth information, I hope you'll visit our website and social media accounts to check out our other content and keep up with the latest from The Home Green.

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Tip 1: Look for B Corps



I put this tip first because if you focus on nothing else, I hope you'll reward companies who care about more than short-term profits. Many people refer to this concept as conscious commerce, the idea that how you use your money can help shape the world. It's a simple concept but figuring out which companies are truly different can be hard. Luckily, looking for certified B Corps can help you cut through the clutter.

WHAT IS A B CORP?

Certified B Corporations are companies that have met the criteria to certify that they are responsibly managing their business and resources in a way that is sustainable into the future. The non-profit organization B Lab is the governing body of B Corp certification and certifies corporations across industries and geographies.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME A B CORP?

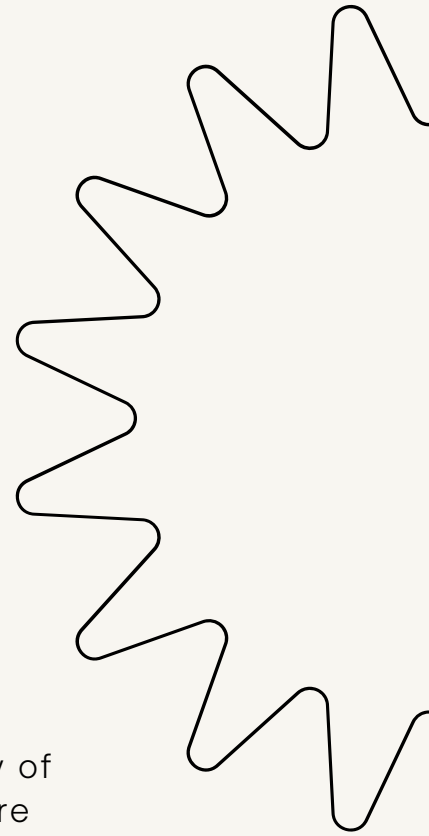
B Lab has an evaluation called a B Impact Assessment that evaluates where a corporation is in its sustainability journey. To be a B Corp a business must also commit to legally changing their structure so that they consider everyone impacted by their business decisions — not just those who make money from the company.

HOME GOODS FOCUSED B CORPS

There are currently over 8,000 Certified B Corporations — here are a few of our favorites.

- Goodee
- Sabai
- Room & Board
- Savvy Rest
- Raven + Lily
- Yellow Leaf Hammocks
- Avocado
- Etsy

The beauty of the B Corp certification is that it's a summary of the entire business that can help you find companies that are making the right decisions for our collective future.



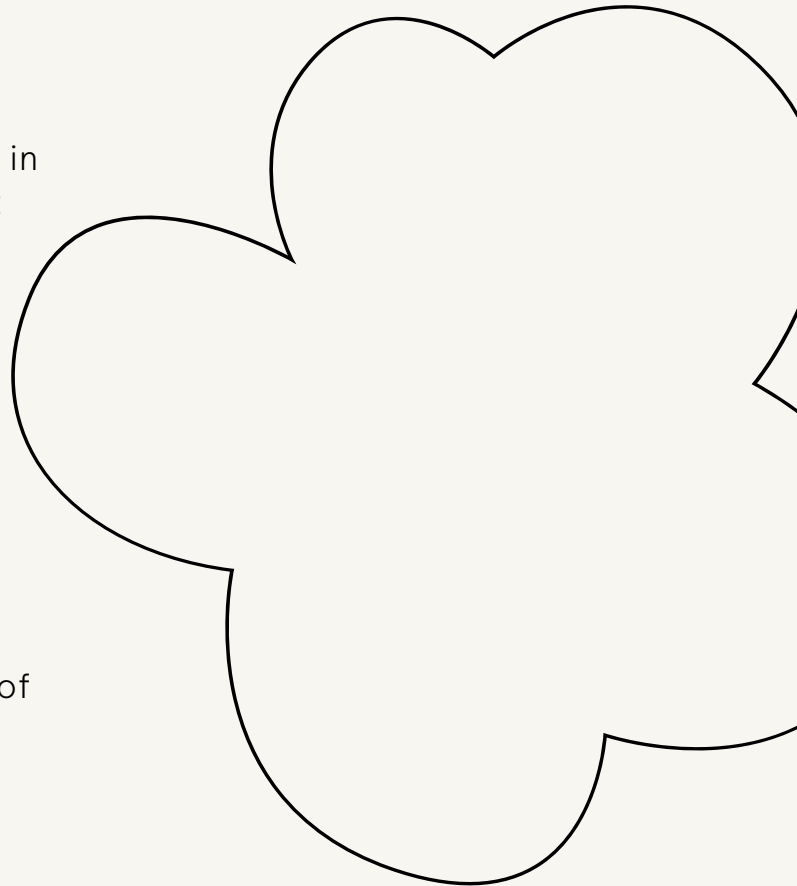
Tip 2: Slow Down

THE PITTFALLS OF FAST FURNITURE

Long before any of us had the thought to worry about the global consequences of our buying decisions, our grandparents bought things based on their quality and how long they would last.

Unfortunately, fast changing trends and low price points have complicated our buying process and turned furniture into a disposable good that's wreaking havoc on the planet.

- The EPA has seen an **80% increase** in furniture disposal vs when they first began tracking in 1960
- The **US** and other industrialized countries are **significant contributors of tropical deforestation** (source: WWF)
- **Forced, child, unfair and unsafe labor practices are still a problem the production of home goods.** Many companies aren't fully aware of the details of their supply chains. (source: Fair Labor Association)



HOW TO SLOW DOWN

If you're interested in treading more lightly on the planet, you may wonder how you can know what is the right furniture to buy? A few key considerations include:

AVOID LOW-QUALITY MATERIALS

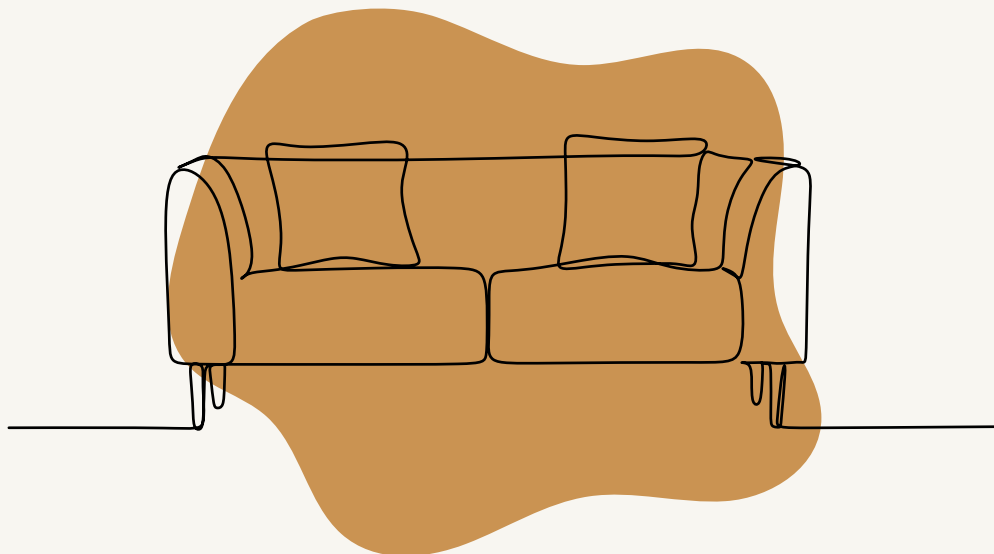
Avoid low-quality materials like particle board and fiberboard. Furniture made out of these manufactured woods is heavy, more likely to contain harmful chemicals, and is typically not as durable as hardwood. They are also often more difficult to refinish than hardwood, making them less versatile in general.

BEGIN WITH THE END IN MIND

Begin with the end in mind — is this something you'll be able to use for many years? Could you easily find another home for it down the road? If you don't think it will be appealing in a few years, it's probably fast furniture.

CONSIDER THE MAKER

Consider the maker — does the brand have a reputation for quality and as a good corporate citizen?



Tip 3: Take a second look at second hand

If you like the idea of second hand but you don't have the time or energy for the old way of vintage shopping, you'll be happy to know that times have changed. Technology has made it possible to find high quality, used furniture with a lot less hauling and hassle.

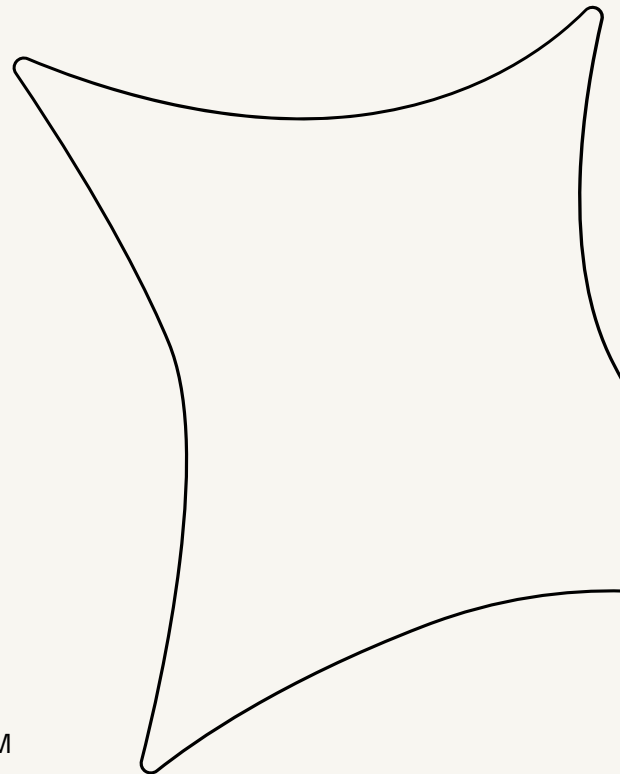
A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE ON-LINE VINTAGE RETAILERS

AptDeco

- Focused primarily around larger cities
- Budget-friendly
- Options for pick up or delivery
- Note: not all of the items listed are second hand — I recommend reading the listing thoroughly

Kaiyo

- Items inspected for quality and professionally cleaned before selling
- Popular brands
- Northeastern United States only



Etsy

- Full range of antique, second hand, and refurbished items
- Terms of sale and delivery will vary depending on the seller

Chairish

- Curated selection of mid- to high-end vintage items
- Items available across the US (and some international)
- Note: not all of the items listed are second hand — I recommend reading the listing thoroughly

1stDibs

- Luxury furniture and other goods



Tip 4: It's about more than the planet



Preserving the planet is a pretty good reason to shop sustainably for your home, but it's not the only one. As I dug more into the sustainable furniture market, I learned that there are some reasons that hit even closer to our literal homes.

YOUR HEALTH

Home goods can be full of substances that can have a negative impact on the health of those who live with them.

These come from things like:

- Flame retardants
- Stain protectors
- Paint
- Foam
- Adhesives and finishes
- Synthetic materials

Focusing on sustainably made goods is quite often the better choice for the health of both you and the planet.

PEOPLE

Just as we've learned more and more about how people can be exploited to make clothing and coffee, we're coming to find out that forced labor and unsafe conditions can exist in the production of home goods, as well.

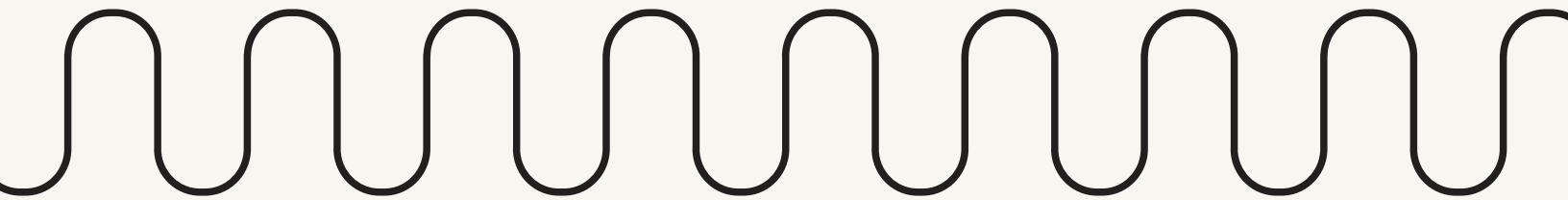
If you want your home to be built on a happy foundation, relying on goods made in unfair and unsafe conditions feels like a bad place to start.

The solution is to work with manufacturers with established labor practices, look for certified Fair Trade products, or buy second hand.

Tip 5: Celebrate What You Have

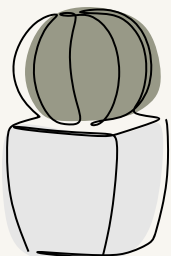
Sometimes we forget about the beautiful items we already have. Since starting The Home Green, I am more likely to pause and think about if I already have something that will meet my needs before autopilot shopping.

Bonus: if you're like many of us who are learning more and more about the benefits of minimalism in creating a happier life, using what you already have is a perfect way to creatively apply minimalist principles to your life.



Some of my favorite reuse items include...

PLANTS



CHILDREN'S ART



VINTAGE FINDS



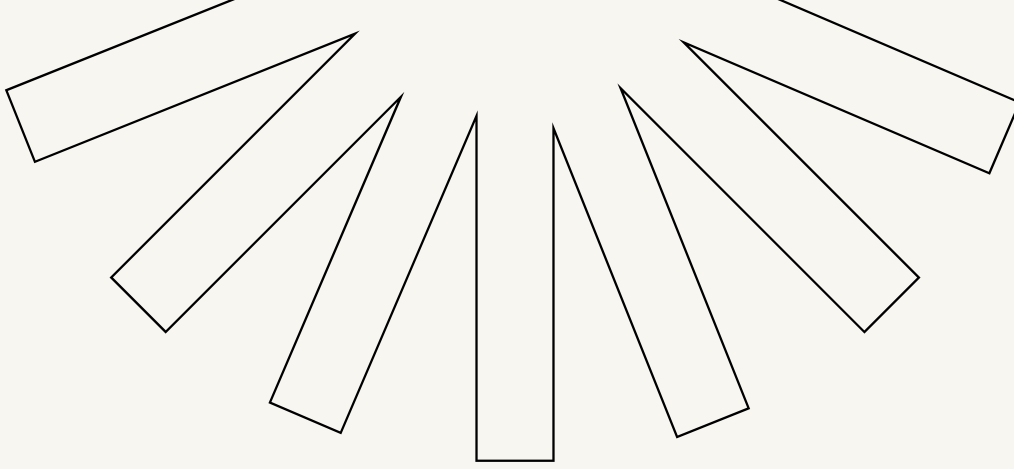
Bonus tip: every bit counts

We don't need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly.

Zero Waste Chef

Even though this quote is about one specific way of living a sustainable lifestyle, I come back to it often when I need inspiration. Trying to understand the complex web of options that go into designing a sustainable home can feel so overwhelming. But if you're reading this, it means you care about doing better, which is already a big step in the right direction.

It's impossible to make a perfect choice, but if we are all a little more thoughtful in trying to make better choices, we'll be in a much better place.



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