THE GREENING OF MONTEREY
Making environmental standards livable—and affordable.
By Kera Abraham
Today, local leaders unveil a new guide to earthing up your nest.  

"If you have many product namers, don"t take it to change - build it. It's cliché formula, but the question takes on new meaning at Ferguson Bath, Kitchen and Lighting Galleries in Seanid, where about 90 builder types sit under magnificent chandeliers for the Monterey County Fair and Fashion Home Improvement meeting of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry."

"Ten thousand to resist the change for as long as possible," says presoenix Tim Scipio, "then $100,000 to tell you how many LEED points you can get for using products that wine-and-choose-sibling audience laughs politely, but split, co-founder of the Oakland and Big Sur-based Ecologic Design Lab, is onto something. He asks how many NARI members are part of a green building program. About one-in-five of the hands go up. Then he queries for skeptics of green building. No one volunteers.

"It's if the assembled NARI members can read the writing on the recycled wood panel wall. In a time of an acme real estate contract, the green building sector alone is growing. For the traditionally conservative contractors encountering up with eco-friendly building standards could mean survival.

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Michael Waser has taken up the habit of prowling Home Depot with a camera, documenting the availability and prices of products that can improve a home's eco-quotient. He stacks photos of motion-detector lights, dual-flush toilets and Energy Star ceiling fans, and collects samples of recycled flooring materials and efficient water filters. Inspiration, in his world, is the pretty color swatch for non-toxic paint.

The vice-president of Carmel Development Company is both a world-class designer of exclusive luxury developments and the site of a new green remodeling standard geared to what he calls "the regular folks who are the core of our society." The driving concepts are simplicity and accessibility for middle-class people who want to make their homes more environmentally friendly in the course of home renovation "freshening" projects, like appliance replacements and paint jobs.

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The idea began at a California council meeting of the American Institute of Architects, where Waser and his colleagues were discussing the recent explosion of green building standards. There's LEED, of course, with its numerous certifications. Then there's Build It Green's GreenPoint Rated system, and the National Association of Home Builder's new National Green Building Standard.

"Each system seemed to come out more complex than the other," Waser gries. "The manuals are becoming More out of reach of the regular folks. All these people at the bottom are not able to engage it as much. Can we come up with a voluntary system that's as simple as possible?"

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Building Momentum: (From top) Fast-growing bamboo makes it a sustainable medium for cabinets or floors; this Syntex Forest home features elements that builders say would earn it a GreenPoint Rated certified. Michael Waser weighs in at a StepUp2Green meeting in Seaside light court through future successes at the new LEED-certified-to-be Monterey College of Law building.  

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