



### From the mail bag; "could we help suggest how to buy "Green Cabinets?"

**Here we go:** While purchasing cabinets are simple to some, multiple components affect resource efficiency and indoor air quality, requiring careful consideration during this selection process. To us, most importantly, you'll also need to examine the woods that make up the veneers, trim, doors, and drawer fronts. Austin Energy Green Building's Sustainable Building Sourcebook recommends domestic hardwoods or certified, sustainably harvested tropical hardwoods as the most environmentally sound choices. "Veneer-grade domestic softwoods are often harvested from old growth timber, and non-certified tropical hardwoods are too often harvested in a manner that is devastating to the forest," the group advises. And, be sure to enquire about the chemical content of the glues used to adhere the veneers to the cabinet box; non-solvent-based adhesives can be comparable in performance and cost, Austin Energy says.

#### ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

Today, traditional composite wood panels dominate, however, alternatives exist that offer environmental benefits or trade-offs of their own. Solid wood eliminates formaldehyde concerns, but it lacks the materials efficiency of an engineered product, is fairly rare, and is more expensive. Weyerhaeuser makes composite panels using Lyptus, a Brazilian-grown wood that can be harvested for lumber in 14 to 16 years. Like bamboo, another cabinetry alternative, Lyptus offers the benefits of rapid renewability but does have to be shipped a longer distance. Wheatboard, made from waste stalks, is another option gaining attention. As with traditional composite panels, ensure alternative engineered materials you select utilize formaldehyde-free resins. Though more rare here, some metal cabinets can be a green selection from both a resources and health standpoint. For example, St. Charles Cabinetry says its metal options contain more than 70% recycled material and are 98% recyclable; the products' baked-on powdercoat finish is considered hypoallergenic.

Read more on [St. Charles Cabinetry](#)

Read more on Weyerhaeuser <http://www.lumin.com/>

### FINISHES

Though low-VOC finishes are becoming more available, they're not widespread due to concerns that are similar to those made during the transition to healthier paints: The quality and richness aren't always equivalent and the application may be unfamiliar.

If you have questions about how to buy "Green" contact us at Congressional Design/Build at [info\(at\) CDBMD.com](mailto:info@CDBMD.com)

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Cheers, CDB