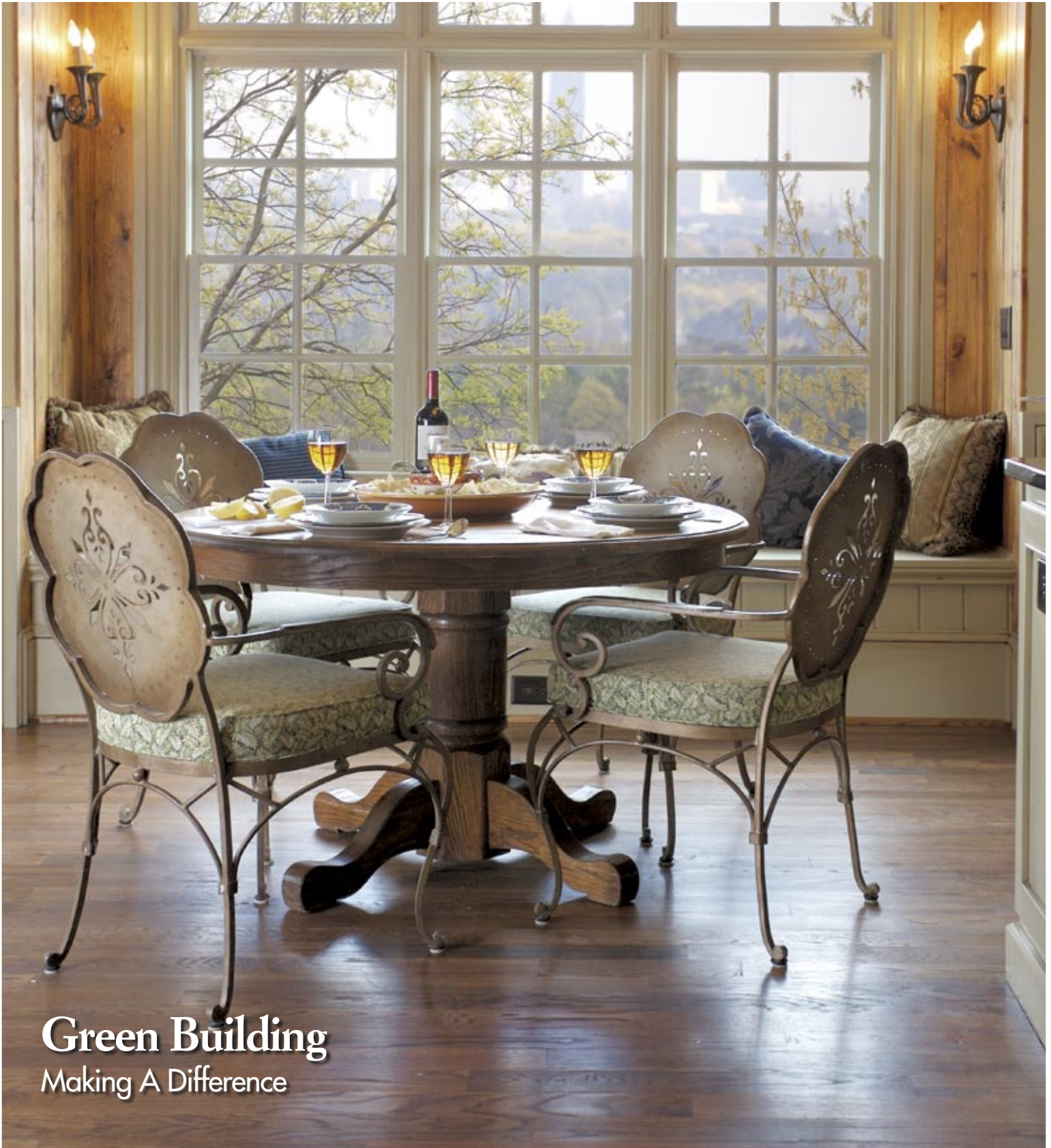

Today's
CUSTOM HOME

ATLANTA'S COMPLETE GUIDE TO BUILDING OR REMODELING YOUR CUSTOM HOME



Green Building
Making A Difference



Making a Difference

Products That Boost Efficiency

By Carl Seville

As the builder of the 2007 EarthCraft/TecHome Showcase home, I understand the importance of building green. The new Tudor style home is an infill project, replacing an existing pre-war house in a developed neighborhood with a project will adhere to the principles of green building and the EarthCraft House program. When building their own homes, many people struggle with the how “green” they should be. Green homes offer higher efficiency, lower maintenance costs and a healthier indoor environment. Much attention has been paid to high profile products such as bamboo floors, natural fabrics and solar panels. These products, while valuable and important, only make sense to use on a building that is efficient, durable and healthy. Here are some items you may want to consider first:

In my opinion, spray foam insulation is one of the most effective ways to make your home healthy and efficient. Foam insulation provides an exceptional air seal that maintains comfort, controls humidity and provides excellent thermal insulation. It works well when installed on the underside of the roof decking, creating an insulated attic space. This is particularly important when the HVAC system is in the attic. When the attic is sealed with spray foam, its temperature remains about the same as the rest of the house, allowing the HVAC system to work more efficiently. Often you can install a much smaller furnace and air conditioner when sealing the roofline, reducing upfront costs as well as ongoing energy bills. Spray foam can also be used in exterior walls and under floors. Visit www.icynene.com for information.

Another product that uses fewer natural resources is a pre-cast foundation. These concrete walls are manufactured to order in a factory, delivered to your site, lowered in place by a crane and bolted together in matter of hours. They are structurally sound, waterproof, come with insulation and interior framing in place, and use about one third the concrete of standard foundations. They are also much faster to install – a whole house foundation takes about 3 to 5 hours. Since they do not require concrete footings, the walls are ready to go in as soon as the site is graded and a bed of gravel is in place. Check out www.superiorwalls.com.

Hot water is an area where efficiency and convenience go hand in hand. How long do you have to wait for hot water for a shower or bath? American homes have traditionally used tank hot water heaters. These heaters are inefficient because they constantly reheat the water in the tank whether or not you use it. Tankless water heaters only heat water when you need it, and they never run cold. They need to be sized correctly, as you can place too much demand on them. Visit www.rinnai.us.

Regardless of the type of water heater you have, how hot water is delivered to each fixture is of great importance. While you are waiting for the water to get hot, cold water is running down the drain. Depending on your home’s size, there are several options. Cross-Linked Polyethylene, or PEX, is a time-tested water pipe system that, when used in conjunction with a manifold, can deliver hot water faster than traditional copper piping. Instead of a single large pipe, smaller pipes are directed to each fixture. The smaller pipe allows hot water to flow faster, and the plastic pipe keeps it warmer than copper. Visit www.viega-na.com. In larger houses, the pipe runs may still be too long. One solution is a circulation loop that runs hot water around the house constantly. While this system provides quick hot water, it’s very inefficient because it’s constantly reheating water that cools as it runs through the line. A better option is a pump that runs on a timer, set to circulate the water at specific times, such as when you get up to shower. A more efficient solution is an on-demand pump, which only brings water to the fixtures when you need it. Go to www.gothotwater.com.

These are just a few options to consider for your project. It’s important to make sure that your builder or remodeler understands how to use new products correctly to ensure that your house is efficient, comfortable, healthy and durable. Your house is your largest investment. Make sure that you purchase, renovate and treat it with care, and it will pay you back by providing you with a more comfortable and healthy place to live. T

Carl Seville is a green builder, consultant, educator and writer on sustainability. He founded and served as Vice President of SawHorse, Inc., an Atlanta design/build firm for 25 years. Through Seville Consulting, his firm helps homeowners and builders create healthy, efficient and durable buildings by incorporating sustainable practice. For more information, visit www.sevilleconsulting.com. For more information on the EarthCraft/TecHome Showcase, visit www.southernbuildingshowcase.com and www.southernbuildingshow.com.

The 2007
EarthCraft/
TecHome
Showcase
home will be
open June
20 to 23 in
conjunction
with the 2007
Southern
Building
Show and
Conference.
