

## **Green Carpeting Options for a Healthy Home**

Most U.S. homes have carpet flooring, where children and pets play and families gather. Not much thought is usually put into how healthy or green the carpeting is, but hazards of traditional carpeting may surprise you!

Conventional synthetic carpeting is made from polyester, nylon, acrylic, or polypropylene, and is backed with polyurethane, PVC, or synthetic latex. It may also be treated with additional chemicals such as fire retardants, dyes, fungicides, antistatic treatments, and stain resisters. During installation, adhesives are regularly used that contain dangerous VOCs (volatile organic compounds). None of these materials are the sort that you would voluntarily bring into your home. Yet these toxic chemicals can leach out of standard carpeting over time and present a health hazard.

Not only is conventional carpeting potentially not safe, but it is also not environmentally sustainable. When it wears out, as all carpets do, it is not recyclable. Fortunately, there are environmentally friendly options for green carpeting that are healthier and can compliment your home just as well.

### ***Wool Carpets***

Before synthetics were invented, wool was used to make carpets. Believe it or not, carpets made from llama or sheep wool are still available. Not only are these carpets renewable and biodegradable, but they last longer than traditional carpets because of their rich texture. Wool carpet doesn't attract dust mites like synthetics, and is naturally resistant to fire, dirt, moisture, and static without needing chemical treatment. However, some wool carpeting might be treated with a chemical to ward off moths. When looking for wool carpet, try to find one that is naturally dyed and that has a jute backing.

To maintain a wool carpet, be careful to keep it dry and vacuum it regularly. Use natural cleaners to make it healthier. Though it might be more expensive than synthetic carpeting, wool carpeting will feel better and last longer.

### ***Post Recycled Content Carpets***

Carpets are now being made out of post recycled material content, such as discarded wool, nylon, discarded soda bottles, and even discarded carpet. This is clearly an eco-friendly option because it keeps the recycled items out of a landfill and uses less energy by reusing them. Recycled carpet pads are also available. When installing a recycled carpet or any green carpet, tack it to the floor rather than gluing it. This eliminates the need to worry about VOCs, and doesn't affect the look or feel of the carpet.

### ***Plant Fiber Carpets***

Plant fiber carpets make another great green carpeting option because they are untreated, biodegradable, and VOC free. They are often backed with latex or urethane. The most

popular plant fiber used in carpeting is sisal, but other plant and reed fiber carpeting are also possible, such as sea grass, coconut fiber, abaca, and jute carpeting. Most plant fiber carpeting is un-dyed because several plant fibers are resistant to dye. However, their natural colors can be very attractive and unique, such as the greenish browns of jute and sea grass.

Although traditional carpeting is not environmentally sustainable or healthy, there are greener options available. Carpets made out of wool, post recycled content, or plant fibers can all be renewable, safe, and attractive options to make your home warm, inviting, and eco-friendly all at the same time.