

How Green Is That?

Use your wallet to demand a cleaner, greener world.

By Jessica Ross

Every issue we use the criteria below to evaluate items for "Living Green" (page 19).

Green Factor

You can influence what companies sell simply by making purchases that are better for the environment. Use the checklist below to help evaluate goods and services before you buy and avoid unsubstantiated claims. Worthy products are those that earn a minimum of two check marks.

- Is the product made of materials that can be sustainably grown and harvested?
- Is the product free of toxic or otherwise harmful materials, such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or formaldehyde in building materials, heavy metals, or antibacterial chemicals or phosphates in soaps?
- Is the product made from recycled materials?
- Is the packaging recyclable, compostable or simply nonexistent?
- Was it produced locally, i.e., within about 150 kilometres of your home?
- Does it feature a logo from a major environmental program, such as the Environmental Choice or Energy Star logo, or that of the Forest Stewardship Council or the Marine Stewardship Council?
- Is it Energy Star certified or is it otherwise significantly more efficient than other products with the same purpose?
- Is the product durable, maximizing its useful life and allowing reuse through donation or resale?
- Are its components reusable, recyclable or compostable at the end of the product's life?
- Does it do the work of several products?
- Are replacement parts available so you can maintain the product?
- Was it made using a renewable energy source (such as solar, wind or sustainable hydro)?

