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With These Outdoor Products, the Earth (and Your Neighbors) Will Thank You

Exterior products that are easy on the eye, as well as the environment.

By Stephen Treffinger

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This article is part of our latest Design special report, about homes for multiple generations and new definitions of family.

It's not easy being green. When you envisioned a meticulously nonchalant drought-resistant front yard, you were thinking "High Line." Your neighbors, however, perceived it as "vacant lot." They left notes in the night. You weren't invited to this year's block party.

Those wishing to be virtuous can still give the block's well-informed (and highly opinionated) citizens something pretty to look at. Designers and manufacturers are employing new technologies and higher aesthetics to combat the green fatigue that ugly yet ecologically sound products can impart.

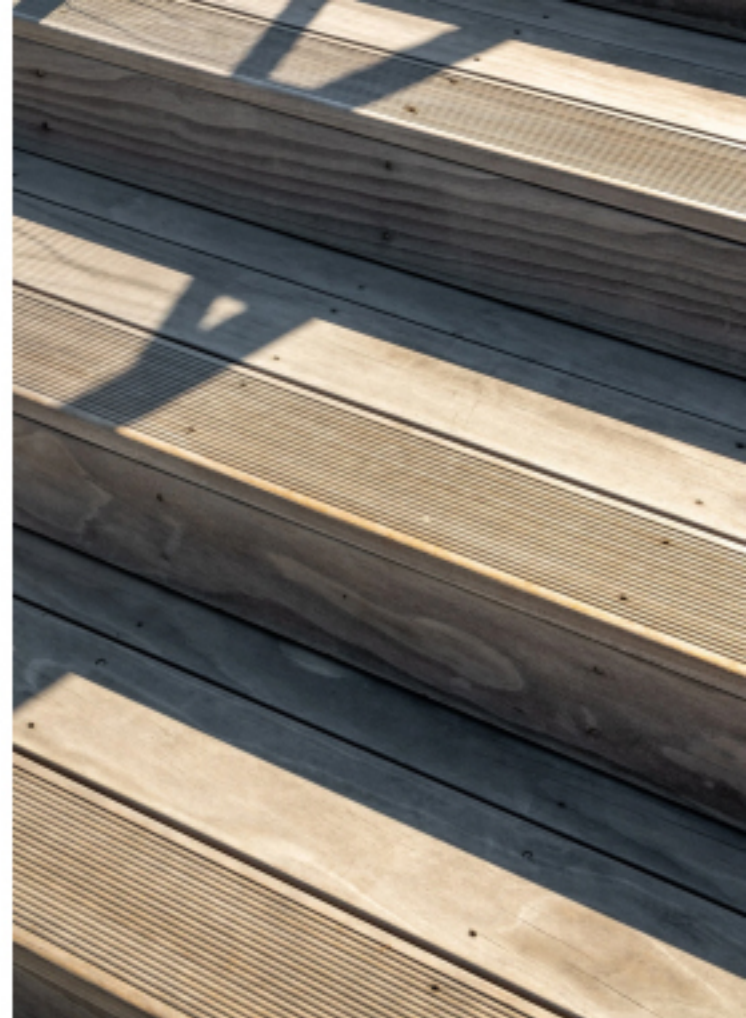
Reinier Bosch, creative director and founder of Studio Solarix, which makes innovative and colorful solar panels (see below), said the company's new collection "provides a glimpse into the future, in which aesthetics and sustainability go hand in hand." Once you've made one of these upgrades, you can quote that on your block's Nextdoor page!

More than just a pretty facade

Solar panels tend to be shiny black boxes that hover awkwardly above your existing roof like aliens. But what if the exterior of your house itself were the collector — and it came in swell colors and patterns? The Amsterdam-based **Studio Solarix's innovative solar facade panels** can generate energy and reduce CO2 emissions. They were inspired by textiles, where different shades, yarns and colors combine for depth perception and a tactile appearance. The palette was designed to coordinate with building materials such as concrete wood, and aluminum. Available through architects, and prices on request; studio-solarix.nl.



Studio Solarix solar facade panels. Marielle van Uiter



Kebony decking. Kristian Alveo

Ain't nothing like the real thing, baby

Decking made from recycled materials is great, but you're always aware of what it isn't — real wood. Simulated wood grain is just not as satisfying as the genuine article. Developed in Norway, **Kebony modified wood decking** is created with an environmentally friendly, patented process in which pine, a softwood, is infused with furfuryl alcohol and then heat cured, which prevents it from disintegrating. The resulting cell walls are 50 percent thicker, providing greater stability and hardness. Kebony doesn't splinter, either.

It has several advantages over popular ipé decking: No special tools are needed to cut it, it is very resistant to warping, and it is sustainably harvested from areas certified by the Forest Stewardship Council. (Ipé is sometimes from questionable sources.) It also comes with a 30-year warranty. From \$6.69 per linear foot (and fasteners); kebonny.com.

Green-lighting your project

Somewhere along the way, solar path lighting got stuck, always having the appearance of lanterns on a stick or maybe some sort of futuristic disc ... on a stick. For something that doesn't scream "home improvement center," look no further than **LYX Luminaires pathway lights**, made from steel with pebble-