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## Sweet dreams: a green makeover for the bedroom

By Tom Watson  
*Special to The Seattle Times*

**This is the third feature in an occasional series on simple ways to green your home, room-by-room.**

We spend more time in our bedrooms than any other room of the home. Sure, we're asleep most of that time. But awake or not, don't you want your bedroom, and all the bedrooms in your home, to be as healthy and green as possible? With these tips, you can do a quick bedroom eco-makeover without spending a pillowcase full of cash.

### Under the sheets

Start with the reason for the room's existence: the bed. You have a close personal relationship with your sheets and pillowcases, so they need to be comfortable. But you can also reduce their environmental impact by switching to organic cotton sheets. It takes 1.25 pounds of chemical pesticides and



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#### Green resources

**GreenHomeGuide:** [www.greenhomeguide.com](http://www.greenhomeguide.com)

**Soaring Heart Natural Bed Company** [www.soaringheart.com](http://www.soaringheart.com)

**One Earth One Design:** [www.1earth1design.com](http://www.1earth1design.com)

**Holy Lamb Organics:** [www.holylamborganics.com](http://www.holylamborganics.com)

**King County's "What Do I Do With ... ?" Web site:** [www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/wdidw](http://www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/wdidw)

**HowStuffWorks — storage:** [www.home.howstuffworks.com/home-organization.htm](http://www.home.howstuffworks.com/home-organization.htm)

fertilizers to grow the cotton in just one set of standard queen-size cotton sheets, according to the Green Guide.

Organic cotton sheets now come in a variety of types such as sateen, percale, damask, flannel and lace.

Sheets and other organic bedding can be found at many online retailers and several local stores, including Soaring Heart Natural Bed Co. and One Earth One Design, both in Seattle.

Holy Lamb Organics, in Olympia, manufactures wool-filled bedding such as comforters and pillows, using wool from Northwest sheep and organic cotton. One Earth One Design and other area stores carry these, or they can be ordered online.

### **Dispatch the dust devils**

Dust loves bedrooms. You've got all that bedding, plus lots of other surfaces that collect dust. And bedrooms typically don't get cleaned as often as other rooms, since guests usually don't go there. Especially if family members have allergies or asthma, you need to make your bedrooms less attractive to dust.

Microscopic dust mites live in bedding, carpets, curtains and upholstered furniture. To kill dust mites, wash sheets, blankets, bedspreads and curtains frequently in water 130 degrees or hotter, advises the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases. You also may want to use a zippered dustproof cover for your box spring and mattress.

Vacuum carpets and upholstery frequently. Consider getting rid of carpeting in the bedroom altogether, since all carpets harbor dust. Wipe down surfaces regularly, including blinds, with a damp cloth.

### **Give it up**

Most of us have too many clothes, shoes and accessories taking up space in bedroom closets and drawers. If you haven't worn something in a year, ask yourself why. Maybe nothing goes with it, or it needs to be altered or repaired. If you're not willing to resolve the problem now, or if you don't know why you don't wear something, give it away.

King County's "What Do I Do With ... ?" Web site lists charities (under Textiles) that accept used clothing. Never donate items you wouldn't give to a friend, since it wastes the time of charities if they can't sell them.

## **Restore your storage**

Improve your bedroom storage to reduce clutter and dust. You'll find many useful guides online for organizing closets, but resist the temptation to buy a lot of fancy storage products. Save money with simple do-it-yourself carpentry projects, such as installing an extra shelf or a new rod for hanging clothes.

Your clothes and shoes will last longer with proper storage, reducing waste. Use "shoe trees" to help your dress shoes keep their shape. Since wire or metal hangers can harm clothes, ban them from your closet and invest in high-quality plastic or wood hangers. In Seattle you can put those old metal hangers in your curbside recycling bin. For other communities, check with your recycling hauler.

## **Green kid space**

Next, tackle the kids' rooms. You know all those stuffed animals sitting on top of the bookcase, untouched for months? They're a dust farm. If your child doesn't snuggle with them every night, store them where they won't gather dust, or donate them.

Some parents have a "new toy in, old toy out" policy, where the child has to pick a toy to give away when she gets a new one. If that seems too draconian, at least sort through toys with your child every six months to decide which ones should go to a new home.

Although large toy boxes seem like a good idea, they usually aren't. Toys get lost and broken in there, and children invariably pull out everything in the box to try to find a toy. Instead, keep toys on shelves or in small bins or boxes, organized by type.

## **Major makeovers**

When it's time to remodel the bedroom, keep the green theme going. Avoid that toxic "new-paint" smell by using paint with low VOCs (volatile organic compounds). Just say no to carpeting and Venetian blinds, to prevent dust before it happens. If you need a new bed, consider a mattress and box spring made from natural or nontoxic materials.

Whether asleep or awake, you'll rest easier in a green bedroom.

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