

CELEBRATING THE STYLE OF SOUTH LOUISIANA

HOUSE

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and home



PLANTATION PRINCIPLES

A NEW HOME IS FILLED
WITH HISTORIC TOUCHES

GREEN-THUMB TIPS IN OUR
FALL GARDENING GUIDE

DESIGNERS SHOW OFF THEIR
FAVORITE HOME ACCESSORIES

A PLACE IN THE SUN

STORY BY KELLI BOZEMAN
PHOTOS BY DON KADAIK



Indoors and out, environmental considerations were incorporated into every aspect of the construction of this four-bedroom home in Baton Rouge's Parkinoff Place neighborhood. Builder Chip Blair of Blair Construction Co. built the home in accordance with the National Association of Home Builders' Model Green Home Guidelines.



Environmentally friendly features allow a new home to shine



At this “green” home, letting the sunshine in means more than just basking in the rays.

Solar energy, captured by a row of sleek panels atop a backyard swing, provides about a fifth of the home’s power. The stored sunshine is capable of controlling everything from lights and appliances to audio and video equipment.

But the solar system isn’t the only energy-efficient feature in this unique house, built by Chip Blair of Blair Construction Co. in Baton Rouge’s Parkknoll Place neighborhood. There are hidden amenities in nearly every room aimed at helping homeowners save money and preserve natural resources.

Opposite top: The kitchen features custom-made cypress cabinets, including a corner appliance garage, that complement the warm granite countertops. Among the stainless-steel appliances is a dishwasher with the Energy Star seal, meaning that it uses less energy and therefore saves homeowners money on utility bills. The room's shaded pendant island light fixture and recessed ceiling lights all contain energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs.

Opposite bottom: Blair worked with Advanced Technologies to install backyard solar panels that help to power a portion of the home's lights and electronics. Some of the home's many other green features include an ultra-efficient air-conditioning system, low-flow plumbing fixtures and low-emissivity windows. Aurelio Gonzales Painting, LLC applied low-VOC paint to the home's walls to prevent the release of harmful chemicals into the air.

Eco-Friendly Features

Some of the environmentally sound techniques and energy-efficient products used in this "green" home include:

- Solar panels and solar-energy battery backup system
- 23 SEER variable-speed air-conditioning system
- Programmable thermostat
- Foam insulation in attic
- Foam gaskets at all exterior plates
- Energy Star dishwasher
- Drip irrigation system
- Insulated vinyl windows with low-emissivity (low-e) glass
- Dual-flush low-flow toilet
- Low-flow plumbing fixtures
- Radiant-barrier roof decking
- Low-VOC paint
- Water heater jacket
- Recyclable carpeting

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"Everybody's trying to figure out ways to go green," says Blair, who recently became one of the first builders in Louisiana to achieve the Certified Green Professional designation from the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB). "I've always been interested in trying to build a better home. It seems like such a waste to build houses that will be there for a long time and not try to make them as energy-efficient as possible."

So when NAHB issued its Model Green Home Building Guidelines, Blair accepted the challenge to create an attractive home that could balance environmental responsibility and practical function. The search for eco-friendly techniques and products began at the start of construction. When framing the house, he constructed larger overhangs and lower roof pitches to help prevent summer overheating. Special spray foam insulation was applied in the attic to create a virtually impenetrable barrier for heat and cold air. Blair also installed an ultra-efficient air-conditioning system in conjunction with a programmable thermostat and whole-house automation system.

Other green ideas were applied both inside and out—from low-emissivity insulated windows that help limit heat transfer to bedroom carpeting made from recyclable materials to indoor paints that contain fewer harmful vapors known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

"We chose to focus on the areas that make the most sense for the average homeowner," Blair says.

While some of the environmentally friendly choices came at a higher cost than their conventional counterparts, the homeowners should realize a significant savings on utility bills throughout the years to come, he adds. And some energy-saving products come with their own financial rewards; for example, new solar energy systems are now eligible for hefty state and federal tax credits.

"With an increase in construction costs of only 10 percent over traditional construction costs, energy consumption is reduced by more than 50 percent," Blair says. "The longer

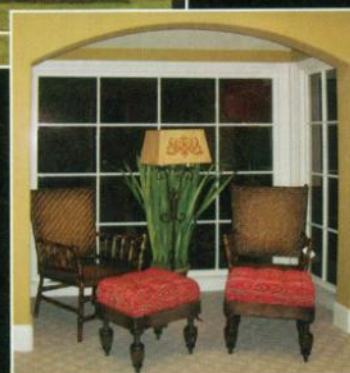
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Above: Thomas Marino, president of Advanced Technologies, points out one of the home's smallest energy-saving features: an insulating foam gasket used to prevent air leakage at an outlet plate. The gaskets, which are inexpensive and easy to install, were applied at all switch and outlet plates along exterior walls.

Left: The solar power hub of the home is located in a closet near the garage and contains a battery bank, which stores power generated by the solar panels and can be employed at night and during stormy conditions; a charge controller, which regulates the amount of electrical charge from the panels to keep the batteries from overcharging; and an inverter, which converts the 12-volt DC power from the solar panels to 120-volt AC and feeds it to a local circuit breaker panel.

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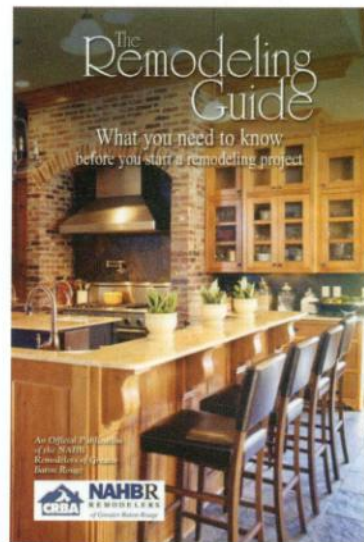
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