

The winners of our home-makeover contest received a free checkup from our "green" Room Doctor, who helped them create spaces that are healthier for you and the earth.

GREEN *by* DESIGN

by Dorothy Foltz-Gray

photography by Deborah Whitlaw Llewellyn

THERE'S NO DOUBT that to achieve true environmental correctness, you'd have to do more than recycle faithfully and choose paper over plastic (or is it the other way around?). For instance, most homes are built with wood, materials like carpet and paint, and other elements treated with or composed partly of chemicals that aren't exactly healthy for you—or the world around you.

But you don't have to bulldoze your split-level and live in a bubble to safeguard yourself, as the winners of our second annual Room Doctor home-makeover contest now know. We've shown them (and you, too, in the following pages) how easy it is to create a healthier haven through the principles of

green design, which relies on chemical- and pesticide-free materials and efficient energy use.

This environmentally sensitive approach is gaining popularity, along with a growing interest in everything organic. According to the National Association of Home Builders Research Center, 13,000 homes were built green from the ground up in 2002, a 70 percent increase in the past decade. And thanks to retailers such as Pier 1 Imports, The Home Depot, and Pottery Barn, ecoconscious goods are now easier to get your hands on than ever before.

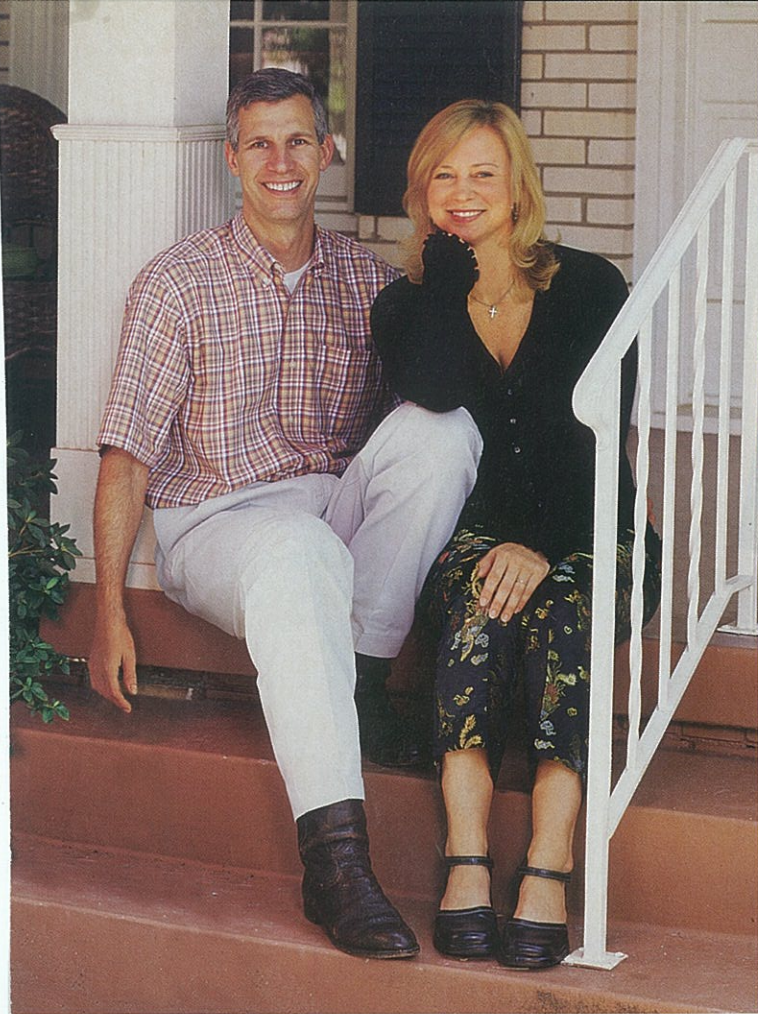
Health enlisted the

country's premier expert on green design, Victoria Schomer, ASID, a principal and founder of the firm Interior Concerns in San Rafael, California, to give two sets of readers room makeovers worth \$4,000 each. "Our homes are where we go to renew," Schomer says. "So it makes sense to consider the materials we use."

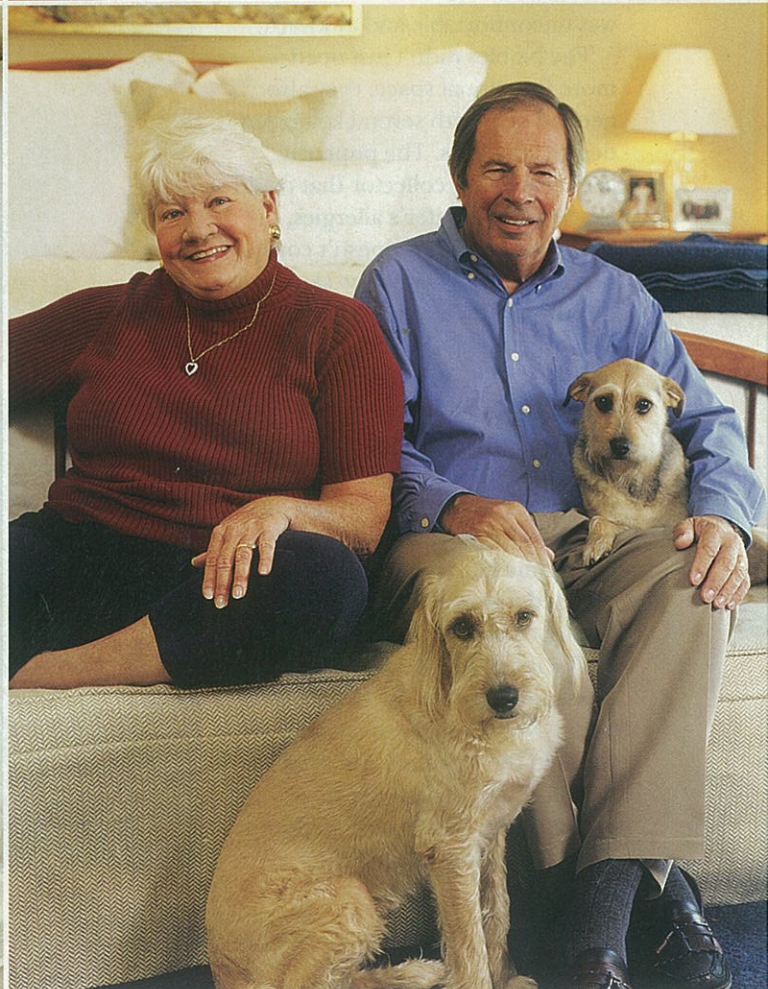
Room Doctor Schomer helped our winners tackle common design challenges—inadequate lighting; long, skinny spaces; storage shortages; and dust-collecting carpets—with easy, earth-friendly solutions. Use them to add a bit of green to your next home-improvement project.



our room doctor
Interior designer Victoria Schomer received the 2000 Design for Humanity Award from the American Society of Interior Designers.



MEET THE WINNERS:
(clockwise from top left) Texans Jim and Jennifer Noble; the state flower plays off the Nobles' freshly painted living room; Lynn and Dave Peterson of Florida; 100 percent organic-cotton bedding gives the Petersons' bedroom a greening.





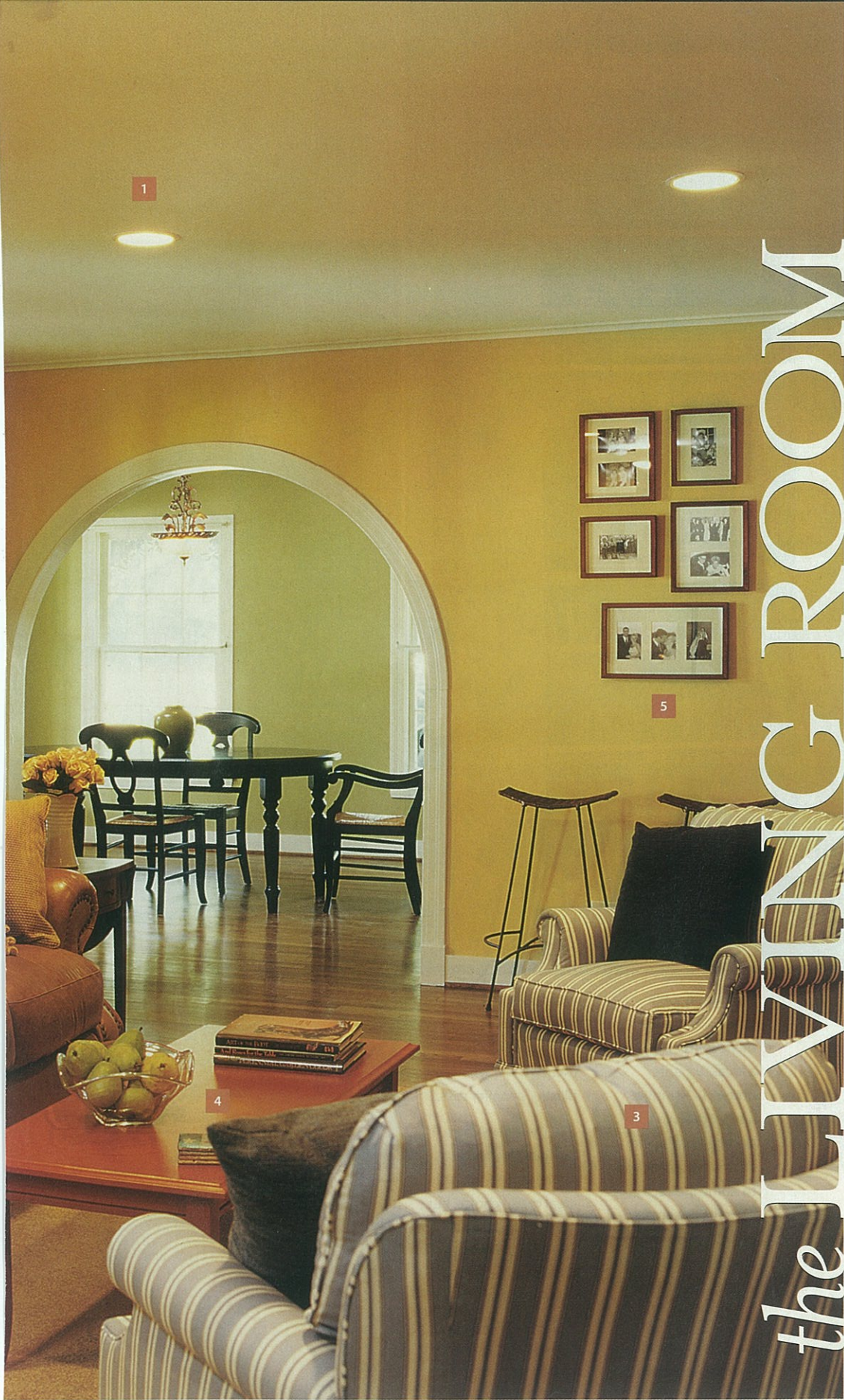
"Jim and I wanted a room that was warm and inviting,"

says homeowner Jennifer Noble, 34, of Tyler, Texas. "We never hung out in the living room because it was uncomfortable and awkward."

The Nobles didn't just need a more functional space; they also needed help with several key green-design concerns. The popcorn ceiling is a dust collector that could exacerbate Jennifer's allergies, Schomer says: "If it doesn't contain asbestos, it should be sanded down." It didn't, and it was. We also brightened the walls with nontoxic VOC-free paint. (VOC stands for "volatile organic compounds," chemicals that include solvents, formaldehyde, and pesticides, some of which can be carcinogenic.) Accessories made of organic fabrics and such recycled materials as plastic soda bottles complete the look.

The result is the comfortable, unassuming room the Nobles were after. "Now we sit in the living room in the evenings and read," Jennifer says. "And we have entertained almost every weekend since the room's been done."





the LIVING ROOM

1 Recessed lights enhance the room's cozy feel. Dimmers allow the Nobles to control the amount of light—and energy—they use. (Fluorescent bulbs are the most energy-efficient, but many don't work with dimmer switches.)

2 Conventionally grown cotton accounts for almost 25 percent of pesticide use worldwide. With that in mind, we gave the Nobles a 100 percent organic-cotton throw by Coyuchi to soften the leather couch.

3 We replaced the room's lone armchair with two swivel chairs in striped cotton. Patterned fabrics hide stains and reduce the need for chemical cleaners. Deepa Textiles' navy pillows are covered with 100 percent recycled-solution-dyed polyester.

4 A simple table in a toxin-free honey-red paint further brightens the room.

5 Clutter isn't exactly an environmental hazard, but it can be an emotional one. We organized the scattered family photos into a neat grouping on the far wall.



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enter to win

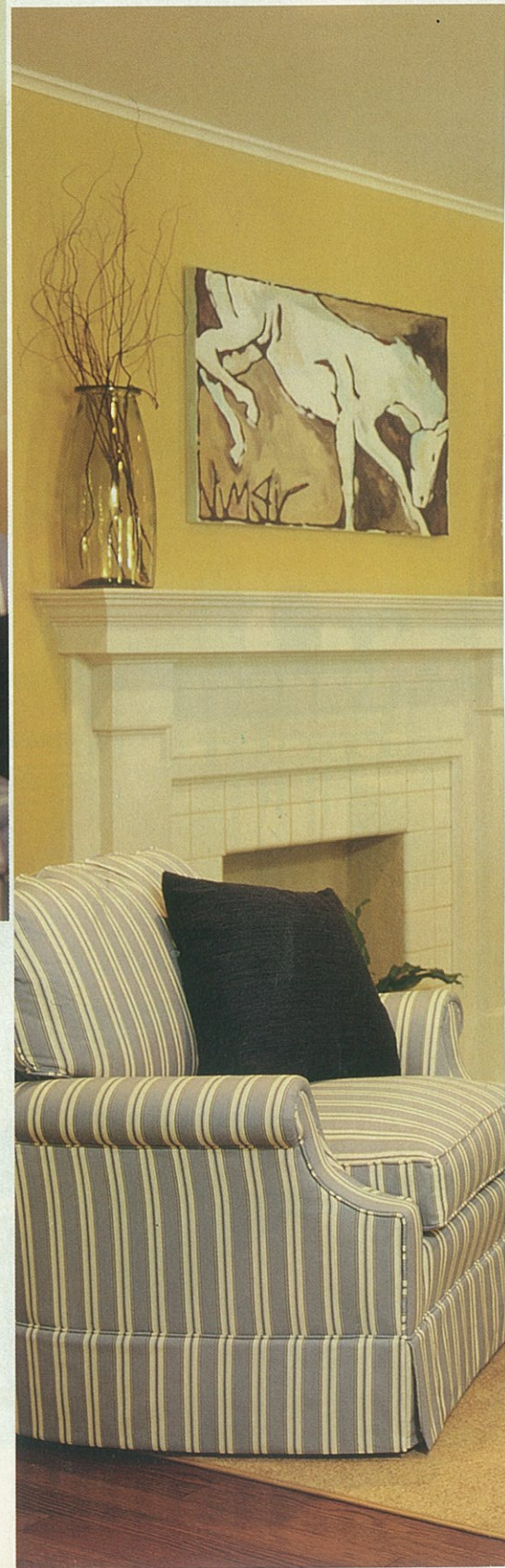
For details on next year's contest and where to find the items in this year's makeover, see page 146.

1 A sustainable-wood entertainment center made by a local carpenter houses CDs, books, and videos in a compact corner. Buying decor elements close to home indirectly benefits the environment by reducing the amount of fuel used to transport them.

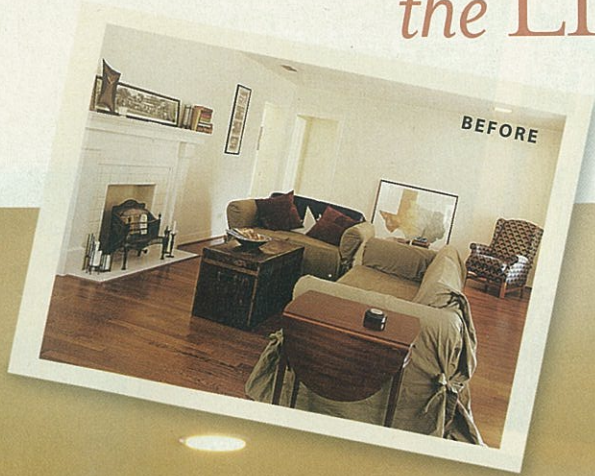
2 To carve out a seating area in the long room, we added Mohawk's

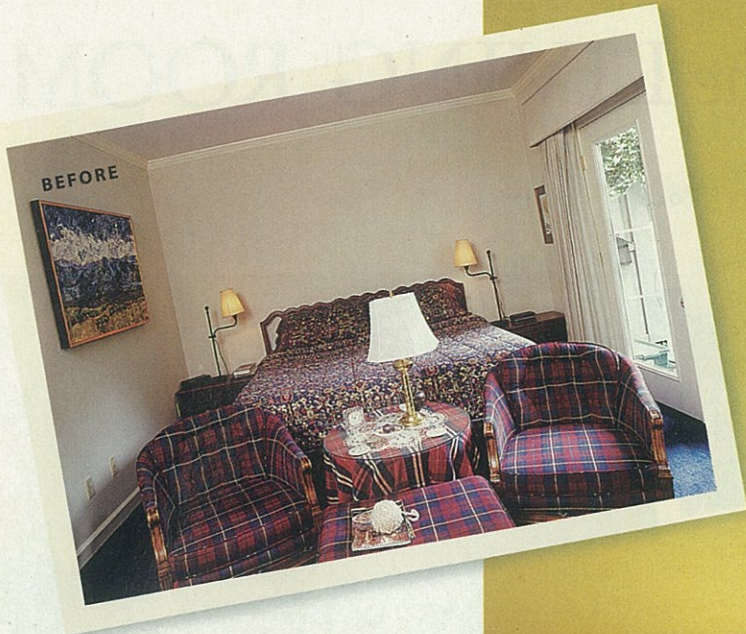
wheat-colored rug, made from recycled plastic bottles. "My friends can't believe it's plastic," Jennifer says.

3 The Nobles had just purchased a leather sofa—not an ideal green choice, but neither is getting rid of a brand-new item. We added a recycled-solution-dyed pillow and one covered in organic hemp, in addition to several conventional throw pillows.



the LIVING ROOM





“No matter what we did, we couldn’t get the bedroom to be bright and cheery,”

says contest winner David Peterson, 63, of Pensacola, Florida.

To help him and his wife, Lynn, 62, literally lighten up, we added recessed lights, switched to light-colored bed linens and blinds, and painted the walls a warm yellow. “You could tell the paint was green-friendly because it didn’t have a typical chemical odor,” David says.

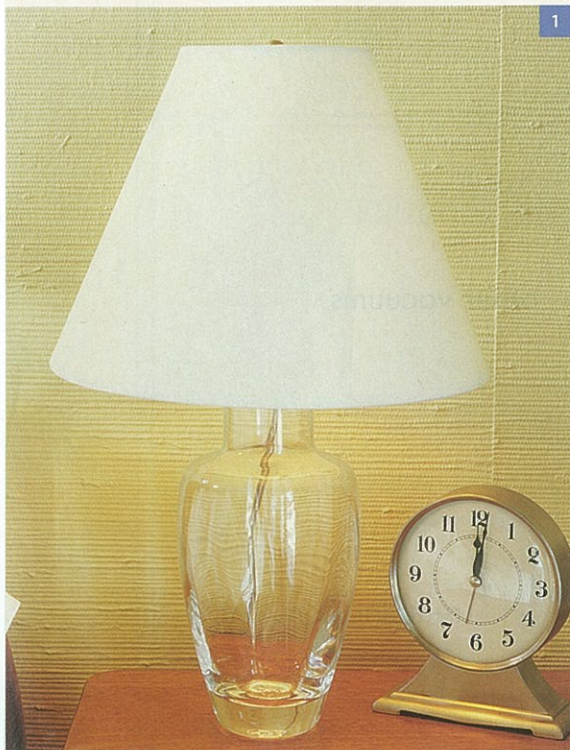
The carpet the couple installed just two years ago, though, is a magnet for dust—a major indoor air pollutant—not to mention dander from the Petersons’ pets. That said, “environmentally, I can’t justify throwing out perfectly good carpet,” Schomer says. So we worked with it, adding neutral-colored cotton throw rugs that can be aired out often.

Now the cheerful Petersons have a space to match their personalities. Lynn says the bedroom makeover “inspired us to do a few things to freshen and perk up other areas in our home. The overall result makes us feel better.”

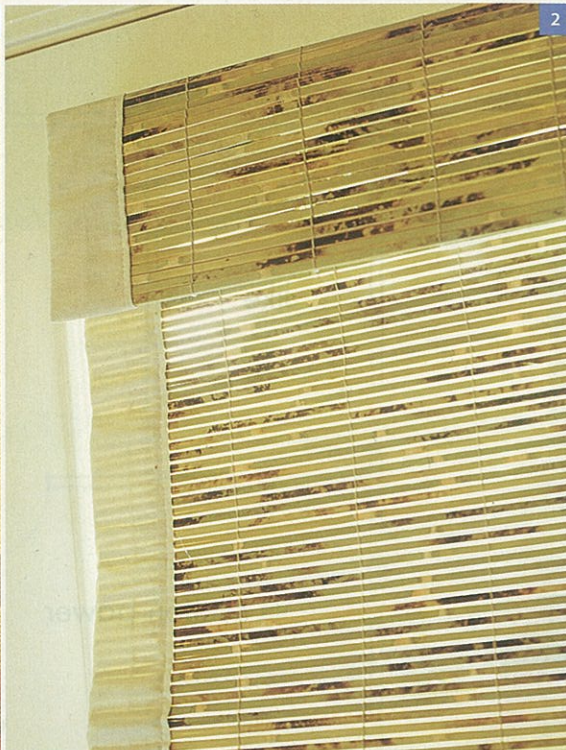


the BEDROOM

Visit Health.com and click on "Mind" to meet our contest runners-up.



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1 Schomer recommends clearing the area around your bed of major electronic equipment to avoid sleeping with your head near an electromagnetic field. A battery-operated clock is just what the doctor ordered.

2 Instead of heavy drapes that collect dust and mildew, we chose light, easy-to-clean bamboo blinds. Bamboo is a good green option because it grows back quickly, Schomer says.

3 According to principles of feng shui, a mirror should be placed away from a bed, because its reflection can draw energy and disturb sleep. We moved the Petersons' mirror to a corner of the room and hung family pictures to echo its rectangular shape.

4 The new bedding isn't just green. "It's so soft and luxurious," Lynn says. "It washes beautifully and needs no ironing."

Additional reporting by Amanda Storey.