

Contact details

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Peter's website lists a number of companies specialising in natural paints. Most of them sell through the internet or by mail order, and also offer a colour matching service.
www.eco-decorator.co.uk

Buy natural paints

Some DIY stores sell natural paints, e.g. EarthBorn's Eco Chic paint range is stocked by larger Homebase stores. Others are available from online shops.

The Green Shop
 Tel: 01452 770 629
www.greenshop.co.uk

Low-Impact Living Initiative
www.lowimpact.org

Green Building Store
 Tel: 01484 461 705
www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk

Green DIY

Donate unwanted paint to Community RePaint - a network of projects around the UK that distributes unwanted paint to charities, community projects and low income households.
 Tel: 0113 200 3959
www.communityrepaint.org.uk

DirectGov's Greener DIY guide to choosing and disposing of paints, finishes and preservatives.
www.tinyurl.com/yvkkkj

This Greener Homes Guide is packed with ideas for creating a healthier, more environmentally friendly home.
www.woking.gov.uk/environment/climate/canyoudo/greenhome

PAINT IT GREEN

It's not easy being green, or even blue or magnolia, if you care about the environment. Many of us spend time at the bottle-bank, reusing carrier bags and composting every vegetable peeling we can lay our hands on. But what about when we decorate our houses?

Enter Peter Padun, eco-decorator (a bit like eco-warrior but with a roller and brush) and champion of chemical-free paint. Peter is an experienced decorator who has now rid his brushes of foul-smelling emulsion and headache-inducing gloss paints. These are put aside in favour of natural paints that allow him, you, and your home to breathe.

"There's virtually no smell and these products have a more natural, less plastic-looking finish as well as being better for your health. I feel better when using them because the paint smells fresher than others I have used," Peter explained.

"In particular, I used to find that when a customer started cooking while I was painting, the combination of the paint fumes and cooking smells would make me feel quite ill. Now I don't get that clash of smells anymore," he said.

"There are different sorts of eco-paints available. It's a bit like having a vegetarian version and a vegan version; there are some that are more natural than others, but these are more expensive," he said.

These paints obtain their colour from natural materials such as earth and mineral pigments, ground up rock and use no

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chemical dyes. It's also important to use compatible thinning solutions and other products with eco-paints.

I took the 'sniff' test with some of Peter's paints. I tried a standard petrochemical version, followed by two different natural products. The smell became progressively more pleasant and substantially weaker as I sniffed each one. "If I paint your house, the only thing you'll smell is my deodorant," Peter joked.

Lynn Jaremczenko of Mapperley asked Peter to decorate her stairs and landing around a year ago and is thrilled with the results. "Peter was recommended to me and the more I learned about the paints, the more impressed I was. When I came home in the evening there was no smell from Peter's painting during the day. The paints dry so quickly that I didn't have to worry about wet paint either," Lynn said.

She is completely converted to this way of decorating and has even done

a little eco-painting herself since. "The gloss equivalent paint washed out with water so it was very easy. The white I used has stayed white. A year on it is still a beautiful, clean white and it's very durable. You can wipe it down like ordinary gloss paint despite the fact that it looks like emulsion and has a matt finish. I would definitely use it again," she said.

Although the paint itself was more expensive, Lynn stills thinks it was worth it, simply for the convenience of not having the smell or the hazard of wet paint.

Samantha Ravenall chose Peter and his eco-paints when she decided to decorate her bedroom. "I've had a problem with chemical-based paints for years and have reacted to them quite badly in the past. I am interested in recycling and composting and try to make the effort to protect the environment. The colours of these paints look lovely and there was no nasty chemical smell afterwards," she said.

In addition to lecturing at New College Nottingham, Peter is offering an advisory service to DIY enthusiasts who prefer to tackle their walls themselves. You can book Peter for a

couple of hours to come and visit your home, show you the types of eco-paints available and even give you a demonstration of how to use them. He will help you to choose the right type of paint for your purpose and budget and set you on your way to eco-decorating your own home.

Eco-paints can not only make your home look great but you can also enjoy knowing that the results have been achieved with care for the environment and health in mind. "Some of the paints can be composted as well, so I really think they are the way forward," said Peter.



Peter Padun.