

# Water, Walls and Whey Have their Way at Greenbuild

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*Andrea Volif, LEED AP ID+C, shares what green products from the 2012 Greenbuild expo in San Francisco can—or may already—be home-bound.*

Schools, offices and other public places usually have all the fun at Greenbuild, the annual mecca for sustainability professionals. And they were still the stars—mostly—at the 2012 annual show. But manufacturers are starting to figure out how their products can work for homeowners who are also in search of sustainable solutions, especially those with a short ROI.

Vertical green walls, an atmospheric water generator and many other approaches mainly used in today's commercial spaces will soon migrate to the residential side.

## Water: Fresh Supply Pulled from the Air



Conveniently located by the expo entrance, **Office Depot's** recycled container booth was a hot spot. Besides offering green office supplies, the company showcased Aquaboy, a water generator machine from **AWS Inc.**, which uses the same condensation process as an air conditioning system to deliver fresh, clean, drinkable water. One of this product's top attributes is its ability to deliver filtered, high-quality water that is free of heavy metals without access to plumbing. All you need is an outlet; it is literally "plug and drink."

Aquaboy can be easily installed in homes located in areas where drinkable water is not easy to obtain or in rooms away from the plumbing line. Averaging \$2/gallon of water, and considering the typical person drinks about 1 gallon of water each day, the ROI in this product can be easily seen within three years.

Innovative as always, customer-driven **Sloan** brought a new line of side-mounted dual-flush products. The best feature of this commercial line is its easy access to grabs bars in a handicapped stall. Providing the same level of water conservation as its top-mounted dual-flush collection, this line is more affordable. Although Sloan shared no plans to bring this dual-flush toilet technology to the residential market, it's not far-fetched to think that homeowners will soon expect it.

## Walls: Vertical Greenery for Fresher Air

Another hot trend in sustainability is the vertical wall. More and more commercial spaces, including retail and hospitality—and now more recently residential properties—are installing beautiful and functional vertical green walls indoors.

Considering certain species have the power to purify the air quicker than others, many consumers are now making use of a green wall for better indoor air quality. From an interior design perspective, the product can be financially comparable to custom-tailored artwork. The ROI is much higher, however, with the health benefits.

## Whey: Dairy By-Product for Low-VOC Coatings



**Vermont Natural Coatings** also had a well-visited booth. Its main product was an environmentally friendly line of wood coatings and sealers made of whey, a natural dairy by-product. Suitable for both interior and exterior applications, it has very low VOC and works under extreme weather conditions, making the products appropriate for use anywhere in the world. The company offers sustainable solutions for flooring, furniture and exterior wood.



*Andrea Volif, LEED AP ID+C and president of VK Sustainable Concepts in Schaumburg, Ill., is a registered interior designer and sustainability professional with more than 15 years of experience in the interior design and marketing industries. She has been quoted in several publications and has authored articles on design trends and sustainability. Recently nominated by the Daily Herald Business Ledger as one of Influential Women in Business in 2012, Andrea is an active member of the U.S. Green Building Council-Illinois Chapter.*

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