

HOMES

Country gardens

Author and columnist Sonia Day on plants critters love to hate, Page 10



Luxurious green

Minto modifies designs, adds enviro smarts to towns, Page 4



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THE OTTAWA CITIZEN, SECTION

THE GREEN ISSUE

Enviro fever



PHOTOS BY WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Phoenix vice-president Rahul Kochar looked after the smart technologies in the \$1.5-million GreenHouse, while his wife, Amita, oversaw all of the design and decorating. 'This is a home first, technology second,' he says. The home, which is an energy and water miser, opens today.



SHEILA BRADY

Rahul Kochar has got enviro fever. The young vice-president of Phoenix homes is in full flight, pulling together the details for the launch of a deeply green home sitting high on a hill overlooking Kanata.

There have been hiccups along the way, including the wrong wall colour, but that's all window dressing in a home

Ottawa's newest entry in the green campaign is a comfortable home first, energy miser second

that is Ottawa's newest performer in EnerQuality's recently launched GreenHouse Certified Construction program.

GreenHouse is tougher than Energy Star, which reduces energy consumption by 25 to 30 per cent and is less cumbersome than the elite Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program that combines energy savings with points for waste management, air quality and proximity to public transportation.

"I was interested in building green when we started this

home a year ago. It seemed like a good marketing idea to differentiate ourselves from the industry. Then I became a total green convert," says Kochar, who admits the green craze initially seemed like a trendy issue, a way to be hip and cool.

This commerce and MBA grad started to look closely at

WATCH A VIDEO OF Rahul Kochar show off neat tricks in his new GreenHouse at

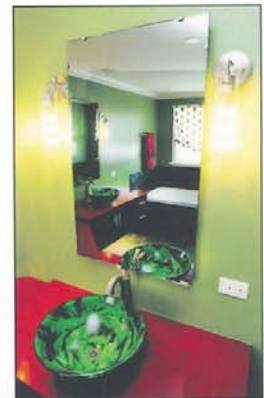
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the numbers and realized going green makes economic sense. "It makes sense to go green. It doesn't make sense not to go green."

There are immediate savings that will offset higher building costs, says the builder.

Kochar has embraced the concept of GreenHouse, promoting the four building blocks of resource management, energy efficiency, indoor air quality and water conservation.



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HOMES

THE GREEN ISSUE

Fever: 'This is not a science project'

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There are six solar panels on the roof, lots of insulation, smart windows and a huge, plastic rain harvesting tank in the basement that retrieves rain water from the roof, cleaning it and using it for watering the garden and operating the four toilets with recycled grey water.

Yet Kochar is determined the green options won't hit buyers smack in the face. Instead, he wanted a traditional, luxurious home, where the green factor is behind the scenes, cutting energy bills and providing comfortable living.

"This is not a science project. This home is about living and comfort first," says Kochar, during a tour of the home. Lower energy costs are an added benefit.

Kochar turned to his wife, Amita Kochar, for decorating advice.

Together, the two came up with a package of window coverings in natural silks and linens and cork flooring. Look closely and you will notice the floors, stairs and banisters are all made from bamboo, an environmentally-friendly, dense material that won't scar, even when dogs charge across the surface. The warm, honey colour is also easy on the eyes.

Look up and fans gently move air, reducing energy consumption and an array of LED lights are throughout the house, starting with novel pot lights in the family room to a new generation of LED lights in the basement, which were developed by a father-son team, and promise to reduce the need for several breakers. The lights are operated with a remote control, eliminating switches throughout the lower level of the 4,000-square-foot home.

The white kitchen is actually a green affair by Guy Bianchi and his



Rahul Kochar adopted a recovery system, which collects rain water from the roof for the five toilets.

Vars company, MR Kitchens. There are recycled glass tiles on the walls, a recycled stainless-steel sink and green finishes, but it's the large kitchen island and the glass cabinetry that immediately impress and the anti-slam drawers and cabinets intended to shut down a tantrum.

The techie will enjoy the powered window blinds that have sensors and are programmed to open and close automatically.

The spa enthusiast will wiggle their toes over river stones in the ensuite's walk-in shower and save water, thanks to the smart plumbing. It was Kochar who chose the deep green for the walls of the ensuite and found two vessel sinks with leaves embedded in the green glass.

There are a pair of mirrors in the ensuite bathroom that are actually gentle heaters, warming up the space and ensuring a fog-free performance even during steamy showers.

The Phoenix greenhouse is pricey at \$1.5 million, but it sits on an oversized 70-foot lot and features a walkout lower level. The base price is \$537,000, says Kochar, who adds there are many green aspects that make financial sense for all budgets.

One of the most important things is to ask for extra insulation and to have a tight building package. "There are many items to pick and choose. This house is showing what we can do.

"The key is to do it," says Kochar.

Sheila Brady is the Citizen Homes editor. You can reach her at sbrady@ottawacitizen.com

THE PHOENIX GREENHOUSE

The model: The Platina, four bedrooms.

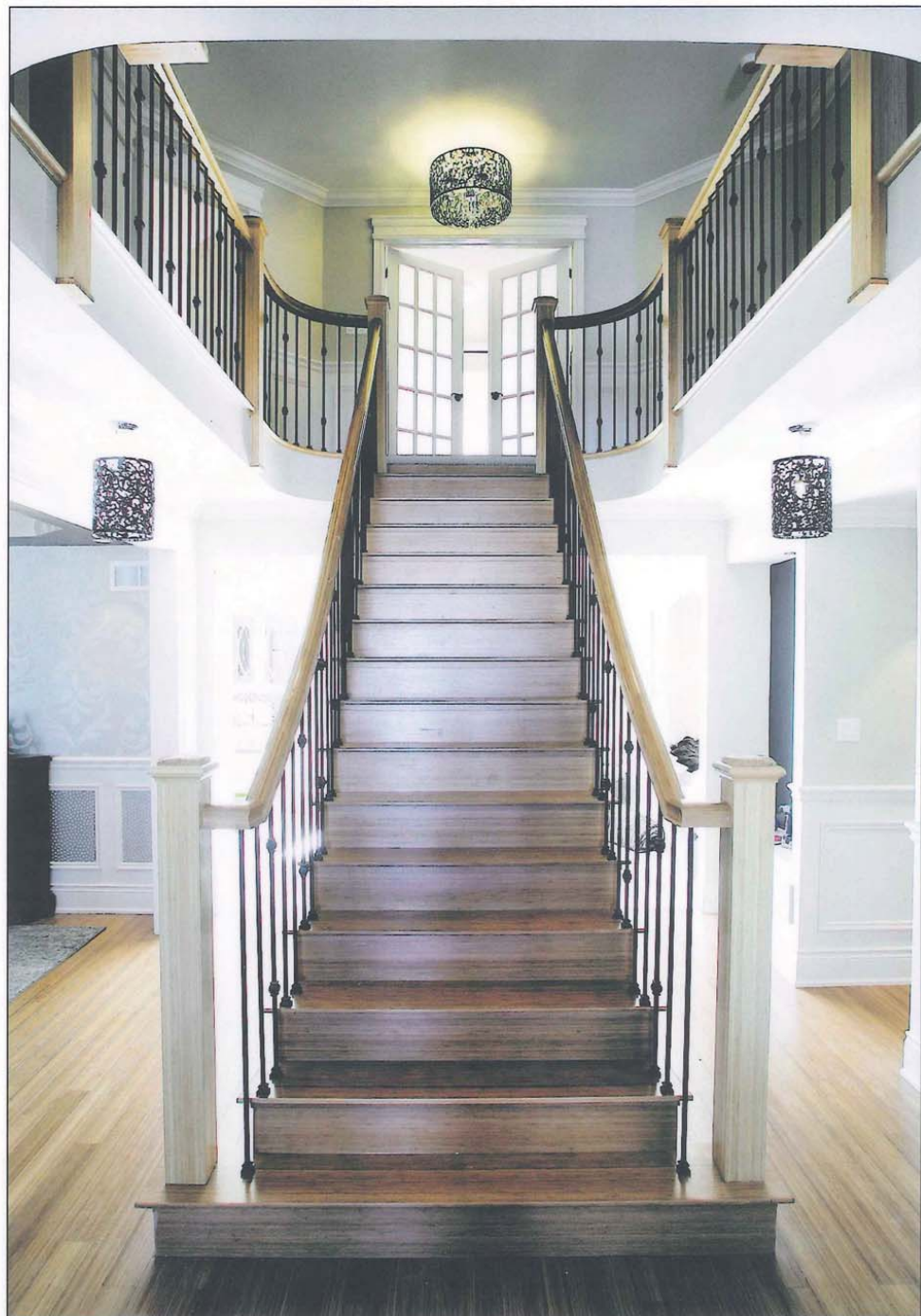
Where: Kanata's Heritage Hills, 202 Huntsville Dr. off Terry Fox Drive near Richardson Side Road.

Hours: Open Saturday and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m., Monday to Thursday, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Closed Fridays.

Price: The Greenhouse sits on a 70-foot lot, features a lower, walkout for \$1.5 million. The base price is \$547,000.

The site: Heritage Hills delivers a view over Kanata, combining 61 lots measuring 35 feet across and 78 50-foot lots for single homes, 37 town houses and another 110 stacked town houses.

Contact: 1-613-435-7062 or visit www.phoenixhomes.ca



PHOTOS BY WAYNE CUDDINGTON, THE OTTAWA CITIZEN

Green is important, but good stylin' is even more important, prompting Rahul Kochar to use bamboo flooring and bamboo for the impressive stairs in the four-bedroom home. The bamboo looks good, grows quickly and is very dense, making it a good surface to resist scratches by rambunctious pets and everyday living.

Explaining GreenHouse

It's more powerful than Energy Star, less complicated than a LEEDS home.

It's the future, writes **SHEILA BRADY**.

There is a red house perched high on a hill in Kanata that promises to change the way we consume energy, save water and even light up the night.

Phoenix today opens the doors to its GreenHouse, the poster child for EnerQuality's GreenHouse Certified Construction program that aims to toughen up building standards in the building industry.

"We could have painted it green and there were some good greens, but we wanted something punchy and went with red," says Rahul Kochar, vice-president of Phoenix and the high energy behind the design and development of the GreenHouse.

"Phoenix is the first Ottawa builder to adopt the GreenHouse program," says Michelle Cote, director of client relations for EnerQuality, a popular private program which oversees certification of green homes in Ontario.

A long list of Ottawa builders have adopted Energy Star standards which were introduced in 2005 and call for tougher insulation, green windows and vapour testing that promised to reduce energy consumption by 25 to 30 per cent when compared to a home built to the Ontario Building Code. There are now 23,000 new homes built to Energy Star levels across the province, 7,000 built in 2010 alone, says Cote. The reliance on low-flush toilets, combined with shower heads and kitchen faucets reduced water consumption and high-efficiency furnaces and cut deeper into energy consumption.

"There was demand for even tougher standards," says Cote. "Builders were asking for a new program," says Cote, especially as the countdown to Dec. 31, 2011 when EnerGuide 80 becomes the new normal, overriding the Ontario Building Code. This program is a half-step below Energy Star, but the drive toward a new code prompted demand for an easier alternative to the elite Leadership in

Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) program which combines energy smarts, promotes reliance on public transportation and reduced construction materials going to landfill sites.

The GreenHouse initiative, introduced in 2008, is basically an Energy Star plus program, but the name is copyrighted, prompting officials to come up with a new name.

"There was a lot of bureaucracy in the LEED Program that builders wanted to avoid. This program is not as complicated as LEED and it is aimed at the production builder. GreenHouse is easier on paper work and is restricted to the building and the site. It does not extend to the community," says Cote.

GreenHouse is based on four building blocks, starting with resource management. The program aims to optimize the use of raw materials and minimize construction waste filling up landfill sites.

Energy efficiency is a cornerstone of green construction, meeting Energy Star's goal of reducing energy consumption by 25 per cent. Added insulation and Energy Star appliances keep the savings coming.

Indoor air quality is all about providing healthy indoor air quality based on using an air exchanger and a series of environmental products, including low VOC paints that do not off-gas.

The final cornerstone focuses on water conservation, reducing the demand on fresh water by 25 per cent, thanks to low flush toilets, faucets and shower heads and a variety of technologies that recover rainwater, gathering it in large plastic tanks to use for irrigation and grey water in toilets.

All homes in the GreenHouse program are tested and verified by authorized officials.

"It is a new way of building and living," says Cote.

Visit www.greenhousecertified.ca for more information.



Amita Kochar puts final touches on the living room in the GreenHouse, an energy and water miser in Kanata's Heritage Hills that is big on design, colour and finishing details.