

Building Your Green Dream Home

By Diana Somerville

Anna Wiancko-Chasman and her husband Paul Chasman visited the Olympic Peninsula and fell in love with the mountains. One day, hiking the Sol Duc, she turned to him and said, “I hope you know you’re going to have to get into a small plane to scatter my ashes here.” He took a few moments to consider the consequences, then asked, “Why wait until you’re dead to enjoy it?”

Before moving from Oregon last year, they chose a spot overlooking Freshwater Bay to make their green dreams a reality. “Somehow we knew Anna was going to design a house,” says Paul, a composer, guitarist and political satirist. Anna, a clay artist whose work is in the Anderson Gallery on Laurel Street and the Port Angeles Fine Arts Center, happily embraced the challenge. “I have stacks of books by my bed. I’ve read hundreds and hundreds of articles and become a sort of “Johnny-one-note” in the process,” she laughs.

The process began with a small outbuilding where they’re now living as their home and studios take shape. Anna’s dedication to cherishing earth’s resources bubbles up on a tour of their work in progress. “I couldn’t bear to cut down any trees, so all the poles are from downed wood that we got from Frank Limke in Carlsborg and John Hunt in Forks,” she says, pointing out the worm holes lending character to poles supporting the porch. Anna and Paul were delighted when their wood recyclers produced a bunch of cedar guitar tops; they’ll become siding in Paul’s second-floor studio. Living room flooring will be heart pine reclaimed from old factories. The exterior, which looks like cedar shingles, is actually maintenance-free concrete siding.

Roof-top solar panels are one visible energy-conscious measure. Less obvious are thermal masses in the south-facing entryway, R-36 ceiling insulation and R-24 in the walls, 1,500 gallon underground water catchment tanks to gather rain from the roof, and the hydronic heating system tubes snaking under the floors and through the walls. An airlock between the house and garage keeps fumes and particles out of their living space.

“We couldn’t have done this without Port Angeles contractor David Bukovnik,” says Anna. His skill and expertise helped her configure the spaces to achieve what she wanted. This is Bukovnik’s first green-built house, “and we’re all learning about this together. It’s a new experience for us, the construction workers, and for providers, who are finding out the benefits of becoming certified” as sources of sustainable green products.

Among the green products are Toto dual-flush toilets, cork flooring for the upstairs rooms and Marmoleum for kitchen, laundry and bathrooms. Earth Plaster, a clay product, provides texture on the interior walls to be painted with low VOC paint. (Volatile Organic Compounds from paint and other construction materials can pollute indoor air with toxic gases.)

“We want to do what we can,” Paul says, to reduce the impact of their new home.

It’s clear from the skylights to the spacious soaking tub looking out over the water, that their concept of sustainable living doesn’t involve monk-like sacrifices.

Anna’s artistic sensibility is transforming their home into a veritable canvas. She’s hand-crafting tiles and creating a driftwood and stone collage to adorn a fireplace.

“We’ve pretty much gone down the Built Green checklist,” says Anna. Although both are overcoming a bit of natural reticence to share their experiences, “We’d like to see this rippling out into the community,” Paul says.

Built-Green checklists, information and support are available from the Built Green Clallam website, www.builtgreencallam.org.