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HOUSE WISE

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Flooring 101

By Elizabeth Guinn

"Do you have any allergies?"

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

1 Flooring 101

1 Dan's Desk

With the Christmas holiday season in site and Christmas shopping at its peak, the end of another semester of school is coming to a close. What's that? You aren't in school anymore? Well time for a refresher course, soooo, here are the basics of flooring to get your minds back in shape. Pay attention, there will be a quiz at the end. Sharon, a reader, wrote in asking which types of flooring were the most green and which would do best in her

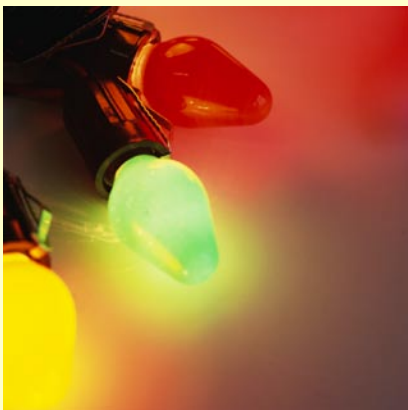
Please see *FLOORING* on page 2

Dan's Desk – Stocking Stuffers, the Remix

By Dan Guinn

If you have been reading our newsletter for any length of time, you know that I love new and unique tools. I am always on the lookout for something to save me time or something that will do the job better. But the real reason that I spend so much time making sure that you all know what is the coolest tool out there for the holiday season is that it beats getting ties in my stocking. Apparently it can be quite a challenge finding gifts for handy guys that are small enough to fit in a stocking. I mean, chapstick is good, but just how many of them does one guy need?

Please see *Dan's Desk* on page 3



From *FLOORING* page 1

bonus room. That's tough question to answer without more information but let's take a stab at it.

The first question I always ask people is "Do you have any allergies?" The number of people with allergies that take either over-the-counter or prescription allergy medication has sky-rocketed in the past decades. I have found a way to help cut the severity of the allergic reactions in our own home by simply making some different flooring choices. If you have any allergies to dust, pet dander, pollen, etc. then some sort of hard wipable surface is your best choice. I have installed almost all hardwood and tile in our current house and have had wonderful results. One of our children was struggling with allergies (as was I) and she also had asthma that seemed to be triggered by the allergies. We got rid of every bit of carpeting except for a few small area carpets and the problem went from constant medication, inhalers, nebulizers and steroids to nothing in a period of 3 weeks. The change was dramatic and permanent.

I have also found that now that I can clearly see all the little dust bunnies hopping around on my hardwood floor, I tend to wipe them more often. Notice I said wipe, if you have allergies you should not be using a vacuum since that just may launch the tiny offenders into the air and cause you more trouble. Vacuums with hepa filters are good, but there is nothing wrong with a good wiping, besides it's more green. Gotta save energy everywhere you can.

The next question I would have to ask is do you have pets? You know the kinds with non-retracting claws that run through the house at high speed. Although real hardwood is great, if your pet is named after a major NASCAR racetrack, as mine is, you may want to avoid the straight hardwood for obvious reasons. I have several clients here lately with dogs both large and small that have been extremely happy with the engineered bamboo. I was skeptical at first but it seems to be holding up well under the excited dog test. My one major qualm with bamboo and most other engineered flooring is the presence of urea based glues which are almost certainly present. If you search and ask all the right questions you can locate bamboo and other engineered



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Please see *FLOORING* on page 4

From *Dan's Desk* page 1



So let's start with lip balm. I'm very particular about what kinds of chemicals I put on my body. Especially something that is going to probably end up on my food or in my coffee, like lip balm. There is simply only one way to go here. There can be no other lip balm than Burt's Beeswax. You can purchase it almost anywhere and it will run you about \$3.00. If you can't find it in local stores, go to www.burtsbees.com. If you are going to be doing any work outside, this is a must. The stuff is thick and lasts a long time and is made from organic products that won't cause any harm in the long run.

My second item is a little bit bigger, but will still fit into most stockings. I love the new Stanley MaxLife 369 Tripod light. In the box it appears to be a standard flashlight. A quick check of the lens area and you will discover that this is an LED flashlight with 6 LED's. This flashlight will run on either 3, 6, or 9 AA batteries and will burn for over 200 hours on one set of batteries. Another neat feature is the fact that the handle of the flashlight unfolds to make a tripod stand. You can then swivel the head around to light up whatever you are working on, hands free. You can find them and Lowe's for about \$20.

My final selection is also from Lowe's. I love the new voltage sensing screwdriver from Gardner Bender. It is a small 6 in 1 screwdriver with an insulated handle. If you have ever accidentally touched something with a screwdriver that was hot, like I unfortunately have, it is certainly not something you want to happen twice. This little device can protect you from unwanted shocks with its voltage checker built right into the handle. Before you put the tip of the screwdriver on that outlet, spin the thing around and place the handle on it and the voltage sensor will let you know if the thing is still hot. I have a separate voltage sensor, but this thing is great because it's all in one piece. It also come packaged with a GFI tester to test those kitchen and bathroom outlets. Once again, it runs about \$20.

I have been playing around with a lot of different LED flashlights this year. One of the things I discovered about LED's is how incredibly bright they can be. The beams of light are so bright and so white that they can be almost painful to look at. Of course, who intentionally stares directly into a flashlight though. In keeping with my LED theme, I decided to insure that we went entirely LED on the Christmas lights this year. Due to a severe allergic reaction to last year's real tree by my son, this year we are having to go with a faux tree instead. We decided to get one that was pre lit with hundreds of little white LED lights. My wife plugged the 7 ½ foot tree in and stood it in the middle of the great room. It was so bright that it not only lit the great room and adjoining kitchen, but also glowed out in to the yard. I might recommend the colored lights, they might be a little less overwhelming. Thanks for reading.

Contact Elizabeth and Dan Guinn at info@danguinnhomes.com for the free report, "Top Ten Best Ideas to Reduce Utility Bills and Spend the Savings on What You Really Want!" Just send me an email requesting a copy and I will speed one out to you!

flooring with no urea based substances which equates to no off gassing. This is also important to people with asthma and other sensitivities. One excellent source of information is www.greenfloors.com which lists all the contents of all of their products and will also give the prices up front.

I prefer flooring that is warm to the touch since I am a bare footed kind of person. I don't mind little patches of cold tile, but I prefer something that has a little less of a shock factor on cold winter days. Another engineered flooring that is a little warmer under foot is the cork flooring. I do not currently have any of this but I am looking forward to including it in my next kitchen. This stuff is anti-microbial, sustainable harvested and can be found urea free. It looks great, feels great and is great for aging joints. (Yes, I am at the point where I think about this)

Most bonus rooms are over the garage which is usually not insulated so my next suggestion is for the flooring underlayment. I love natural wool underlayment for any wood flooring that you are going to install. If you go looking for this stuff you will probably have to ask for wool acoustic underlayment since it was originally made for sound deadening purposes. It comes in rolls about the same size as roofing felt and is 3mm thick. The wool helps regulate humidity by absorbing or releasing moisture into the room as needed, deadens sound and helps regulate temperatures. But the best part about this stuff is the fact that it absorbs VOC's that could be released into the room from the plywood sub floor. It doesn't just seal off the gases, it actually absorbs them. Great stuff since urea free plywood is hard to come by and probably wasn't around when the majority of houses were built. A little extra insulation can help with the energy bills as well.

Hope this helps. Keep the questions coming, we love hearing from you. And I was just kidding about the test.



Shameless Picture of cute puppy with sharp toes

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Psalms 127:1a*



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