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one

Central to our DIY culture is a mass weekend pilgrimage to giant hardware stores, where a proliferation of cheaply produced tools promises all manner of domestic productivity. While our national "Can do" attitude is a good thing, the wasteful consumption of tools and materials that it encourages is not. Local initiatives such as the Brunswick Tool Library in Melbourne are providing an alternative to this through a membership service offering access to a large range of high quality tools. Tool-sharing between groups of friends, club members and neighbours is another way to tackle the problem. It allows you to share tools you already own, or pool resources to buy high quality items that will last.

brunswicktoolibrary.org

two

Once you have the hang of sharing equipment the possibilities are endless. Online sharing and swapping resources such as Streetbank allow you to tap into your local community to borrow and share what you have. Watch out for the potentially happy side effect of exchanging skills, knowledge and ideas between strangers and friends.

streetbank.com

friendswiththings.com.au

tushare.com

three

When deciding which type of heating system to place where, consider first what type of heat each generates. Convection heaters (ducted, fan and reverse cycle) warm the air which then rises and circulates. Radiant heaters (wood-burners, hydronic, and electric panel) radiate heat into the furniture, objects and people around them. Convection heaters work best in well-insulated spaces with standard ceiling heights, or areas that require heating up quickly for short periods. Radiant heaters are a better choice for poorly insulated spaces with high ceilings, voids or open plan layouts and when they can be located where people spend most of their time. Heaters that use a combination of convective and radiant heat (such as fan-forced gas/wood fireplaces) are ideal when using space heating for large areas.

four

If you have thermal mass inside your home or workplace then rugs, furniture and wall coverings will affect its heat storage capacity by reducing the surface area exposed to winter sunlight. Winter is a good time to rearrange the furniture and pull up any rugs that could be diminishing the passive heating function of high mass floors and walls.

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five

Identifying which products are more "green" than others is a headache, even for the experts. Manufacturers can use third party certification to indicate that a rigorous, scientific and relevant audit has taken place examining the entire manufacture, use and disposal life-cycle of a product. Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) and EcoSpecifiers' Global GreenTag Scheme are two trusted Australian bodies providing eco-certification to a growing range of interior building resources.

geca.org.au

ecospecifier.com.au

Six

For small companies and craftspeople third party eco-certification can be financially and logistically unattainable. As a consumer you potentially have the advantage of being able to have a dialogue with the producer, which can allow you to make your own assessment of how thoroughly they are responding to the challenge of minimising the ecological impact of their products.

seven

In rental properties it is the landlords' responsibility to ensure that gas heaters have been serviced every two years to check for faults or leaks. Carbon monoxide poisoning can cause a range of symptoms, from headaches and tiredness, to unconsciousness and death. As a tenant you can request that a licensed gasfitter has deemed an appliance is safe before you use it. Stop using heaters immediately if the pilot light burns a colour other than blue, if you smell gas or there are signs of soot/heat damage around the heater.

eight

Australia has a vibrant and burgeoning ceramics scene, with a diverse range of artists producing beautiful wares with unique narratives. Melbourne ceramicist Kate Hill has recently explored site-specific ideas around gathering, foraging, local ecologies, resources and waste with her River Cup project. She collects both clay waste material or hand-dug Elltham clay, combining it with water from the Merri Creek or Yarra River. The results are a beguiling collection of texturally unique vessels complete with visible traces of river sediment encapsulated on their surfaces.

katehill.com

katehill.blogspot.com.au

