

GREEN LIVING

A Little Help

Where do you turn when you don't have the time to shop for hemp towels or research bamboo floor coverings?

Calling themselves environmental interior designers, organic landscapers, eco-friendly personal shoppers, or sick house analysts, environmental consultants do everything from answering questions about nontoxic paint to telling contractors what type of foundation to pour. Consultants can choose your clothing, demagnetize your house, or adjust its chi. You dream of it, and there's probably a consultant who can make it a reality. The only problem is finding that consultant.

"I know the general public has no idea this exists," says Mary Cordaro, president of Valley Village, California-based H3Environmental.

Many environmental consulting companies are small or specialize in certain disciplines or geographical areas. Consequently, they tend to rely on referrals from other clients, making them difficult to find if you're not in the loop. "It's always word of mouth," Cordaro says. "Once in a while you'll see an ad in the Yellow Pages."

Cordaro specializes in *baubiologie*, a German discipline that focuses on healthy as well as green houses. Along with her partner, environmental interior designer Jeremy Singleton, Cordaro works with architects and builders to design nontoxic

houses from the ground up. She also does healthy house remodels, inspecting for mold, chemicals, and electric fields.

Because their projects are extensive, Cordaro and Singleton work on only six to eight houses a year. But they will answer simple questions about healthy homes through a free resource and referral hotline, (818) 766-1787, or via email at their website, www.h3environmental.com.

Cordaro notes that California, Colorado, and Texas are home to quite a few environmental consultants, particularly interior decorators. The same isn't true east of the Mississippi, she says. Delia Montgomery, owner of Chic Eco Consultation Services in Lexington, Kentucky, agrees. "It's real slow coming to the East," she says.

Montgomery does personal shopping for eco-friendly clothes and household furnishings. Rather than designing entire houses, she deals with specific requests such as planning an eco-friendly wedding and tracking down specific items.

Tom Kay, president of EcoMall, says his website (www.ecomall.com) lists some environmental consultants, but while "every architectural firm has a



green freak" and there are plenty of *feng shui* consultants and environmental interior decorators, "there are very few omnipresent people who are smart enough and diverse enough to come to your house and tell you how to do everything from full-spectrum lighting to feng shui."

Kay recommends that potential clients shop locally first. "Go to any health food store, pick up a local guide, and see who's listed," he says. You might have to hire several consultants to get your house and garden entirely into shape. Cordaro recommends a search through the Natural Resource Directory (www.nrd.com) and the Co-op America Directory (www.coopamerica.com), particularly for environmental interior designers. "You really have to do some sleuthing," she says.

—Vicky Uhland