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The eNewsletter of the Sustainable Building Coalition
P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381 www.greenbuilder.com/sbc

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A lot of us want to live more sustainably, use more renewables from local sources, use lots less energy and water, bring back the soil, grow food/have gardens, and honor and assist Nature. And many of us will have to/want to live in a regular looking house, on a lot, in a neighborhood, in a town/city with rules, codes, inspectors and C/Os, need to have a mortgage (and then an equity line for college educations, etc.), and/or sell someday to someone else who has these same needs. Building Green, remodeling Green, living Green, especially in Austin, TX, can accomplish nearly all of the above. Dick's presentation puts a lot of separate pieces together and highlights the simpler/less expensive items that we can all do whether we are building, remodeling, or maintaining. Come on and hear if you don't know it. Come on and cheer if you do know it.

Dick Pierce is a 7-year Austinite, major fan of the SBC and its Membership, and a passionate about each citizen doing the max to make Austin "greener" (buildings, trees, vegetables, beer), and more sustainable. He is a Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Permaculture teacher, and has a Certificate in Landscape Design. He has the fortune of representing the staff and young people at American YouthWorks' Casa Verde Builders(CVB), who, according to him/them, are the most devoted Green Builders in town, with several 5-STAR homes. Also, SBC founding member, Gayle Borst, has been CVB's award-winning Architect.

Announcement

The Clip Board Lady Wants YOU! Again!

A most excellent opportunity for business members to display their cards and literature, and a time for general members to find out what brought visitors to the "Austin Green Living & Home Products Expo" January 20-22 at The Austin Convention Center. Clip Board Lady, Yvonne, needs you to call her @ 693-0293 and tell her which 3- 4 hours, and which day you can be at our booth. She will give you details. Business members, please bring your cards & literature to our Wednesday, January 18, meeting. What we do: sell books, sign up new members, converse with visitors, share why you joined SBC, what we do, i.e., programs, workshops, site visits, etc.

Call me! Yvonne

January RESOLUTION Reminder
Please renew your SBC membership!
(Learn how on p. 6)
THANK YOU!

Materials: Wood

by Megan Clark

What about wood? This is a question that has placed some in the green building community on the fence, so to speak. On the one hand, wood is a natural material that adds aesthetic and psychological warmth, it can be worked by both skilled craftsmen and inexperienced owner/builders, and, now, supply chains like Home Depot and Lowe's offer FSC-certified building products. (www.homedepot.com, www.lowes.com) On the other hand, of course, wood remains a slow-growth resource, and there are concerns about the ability of forests world-wide to withstand the pressures of population growth and building booms. So, why am I sharing all this with you? This month we are investigating Mesquite wood flooring, and what we find just might bring you down off that fence.

A handful of Mesquite species, and principally the Honey Mesquite or *Prosopis glandulosa*, are native to the State of Texas. Over the last two hundred years the population of this local resource has grown from 30 million acres to almost 55 million acres as a result of two major factors: fire suppression and cattle. Controlled burns and wildfires moderate the height and seed production of these resilient plants, but the trend for fire suppression has enabled bushes to mature into trees and fostered dense Mesquite colonies. (www.fs.fed.us) Cattle, originally introduced by Spanish settlers, have increased both the geographical spread of Mesquite seed and its successful germination due to the length and complexity of their digestive process. (www.tsha.utexas.edu) The consequence is an over-abundant natural resource that landowners often expend great energy to remove. As a commercial resource, however, the wood can be dried, milled, and manufactured in one of many Texas facilities that deal partially, if not exclusively, in Mesquite products. These key points contribute to the product's ecological sustainability, while promoting the economy of local busi-

nesses and maintaining a cultural connection through regional crafts.

So, how does Mesquite flooring stack up against the competition? Mesquite is among the hardest and most dimensionally stable domestic hardwoods, a testament to its physical sustainability. The Janka Hardness test, administered nationally by the U.S. Forest Products Lab, measures the amount of force required to embed a 0.44 inch diameter steel ball into a wood surface. Mesquite requires 2345 units of force, almost 62% higher than Hard Maple (1450 units) and 72% higher than White Oak (1360 units). The wood's dimensional stability has a change coefficient of 0.00129, meaning that for each percentage change in moisture content, a 1 inch width of Mesquite wood will shrink or swell by 0.00129 of an inch. (www.woodfloors.org) Mesquite is also extolled for shrinking equally in all directions, where most woods shrink in greater proportion across the grain. (www.woodcentral.com) The Honey Mesquite ranges in height between 20-40 feet for mature trees and between 10-15 feet for multi-stemmed bushes, and is considered small-diameter timber. This has made end-grain block, much like a butcher's table, a more common choice for flooring construction, but the wood can also be milled to produce more traditional planks that exhibit a fine, burling grain. Both cuts yield color ranging from medium brown to deep red brown which can be achieved with water- and oil-based stains, respectively. The challenge of milling small diameter timber and the overall durability of Mesquite generally make it more expensive than other hardwood options, with market prices between \$6.00 and \$10.00 per square foot for unfinished planks as compared to \$3.50-\$7.00 per square foot. (www.woodflooronline.com) In my search, however, I have found suppliers in the Austin area with costs between \$6.00 and \$8.00 per square foot.

There are a number of additional benefits to using Mesquite flooring. Projects using the product are eligible for LEED points under Materials & Resources Credit 5.2 (Regional Materials), as well as points in the Austin Residential Green Building System under Community. The most understated advantage of Mesquite flooring is the potential to utilize a resource that might otherwise be disposed of through brushfire management efforts and brush eradication programs. (www.ci.austin.tx.us/greenbuilder) The unique partnership of materials use and responsible land management practices has been applied to several European projects using small-diameter timber thinned from overly dense forests. (www.solearth.com) Around Austin, Mesquite flooring can be found through Eco-Wise, who also offers non-toxic staining options, as well as Texas Kiln Products, Texas Woods, Inc. and Mesquite and Hardwood Milling Designs. (www.ecowise.com, www.texaskilnproducts.com, www.texaswoods.com, www.mhmdesigns.net) For further information on Mesquite flooring and other craft products throughout Texas contact the Texas Mesquite Association at 830-997-8515 or through their website, www.texasmesquiteassn.org. And although they are not a local business, The San Pedro Mesquite Company out of Bowie, Arizona offers articles and in-depth discussion on the relative sustainability of Mesquite through their website, www.spmesquite.com.

Update on last month's Materials: Cotton Insulation—also check out our newest business member's website at www.goodcommonsense.net.

Please email me with suggestions, comments, or questions to meganann@mail.utexas.edu.



Local Workshops

Weekend Permaculture Design Certification Course

Ten-day course led by Dick Pierce, Selwyn Polit, and other Austin area instructors/designers, offering practical training and skills in sustainable living. We will cover design principles and technologies that you can easily apply to your home, workplace, and community to help you live well in the city or the country. Weekends & Saturdays, Jan 21 – Mar 18, 2006 in Austin, Texas. Attend for 1 day or the whole course. For: Professionals and amateurs: Homeowners, apartment dwellers, farmers, foresters, land developers, city planners, architects, teachers, and many others. More at

www.AustinProgressiveCalendar.com/permaculture.htm. Learn techniques, tools & design ideas to: Design homes and landscapes that serve people, attract wildlife, and create restorative habitat. Mimic nature to design solutions to problems unique to our Central Texas climate, water, soil, vegetation, gardening etc. Capture and effectively use and re-use water. Build an herb spiral, install a pond, use natural & green building techniques, Read a landscape to determine optimum placement of design elements. Maximize food output - compact growing areas. Encourage natural cycles - plants, animals, etc. Implement landscapes that take care of themselves. Considerations & designs for rural land, farms, ranch, animals, orchards. Additional topics: Ecosystems, Ecology, Microclimate, Edible landscape, Waste, Wastewater, Trees & Forests, Soil, Erosion Control, Water harvesting, Aquaculture, Animals, Gardening, Urban strategies, Wild land rehabilitation, Chickens, Design, Creating a culture of cooperation, Building design, Maps and mapping.

Convenient schedule: weekends & Saturdays

Jan 21&22	Permaculture Basics
Jan 28	Water & Soil
Feb 4	Urban, plants, gardens
Feb 18	Building & Energy
Feb 25	Rural, Ranch, Farm
Mar 4	Design
Mar 11 & 12	Design
Mar 18	Design

Make Your Yard a Green Garden!

City of Austin Green Garden program and the National Wildlife Federation present "Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard." Learn how having a water garden and planting the right plants will attract birds, hummingbirds, butterflies and other beneficial animals to your yard. Learn how to become a Certified Backyard HabitatT by providing water, shelter, and food for wildlife.

January 28 at Zilker Botanical Garden, 9-noon
Cost is \$10.00. Pre-registration and payment required by: January 26, 2006. Call 974-2550.

To get on our mailing list for future class announcements, call 974-2550.

Austin Community College (ACC), in partnership with the State Energy Conservation Office (**SECO**), will be offering a **48-hour course in solar electricity** for students to obtain the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (**NABCEP**) Photovoltaic (PV) Entry Level Certificate of Knowledge. The fourteen-week class will run from January 30-May 6, 2006, and again over a fourteen-week period in the Fall of 2006. For both the Spring and Fall classes, the last three weeks of the session will include a hands-on installation of a PV system. **The class is limited to 15 participants.**

The NABCEP Entry Level Certificate Program is designed for those wanting to enter the solar electric energy field. While the Certificate of Knowledge by itself will not qualify an individual to install photovoltaic (PV) systems, it does recognize an understanding of the basic terms and operational aspects of a PV system. Students receiving the Entry Level Certificate will then be eligible to enter the workforce and secure the required two years of on-the-job training, including installing four PV systems. From there, they'll be able to sit for the NABCEP certifying exam for installers of PV systems.

The confluence of three recently-enacted actions, including the 30 % federal solar tax credit in the 2005 Energy Bill, the new Texas RPS legislation which features a 500 MW target for non-wind renewable resources, and Austin Energy's Solar Rebate Program provides a well-timed opportunity for Texas to scale up its workforce development training in renewable energy courses to meet consumer demand for quality installed solar energy systems.

The actual class listing, [HART 1071 Solar Electricity \(Photovoltaics, 48 hours\)](#) is described as *a course in the study of solar photovoltaic (PV) cells, modules, electrical circuits and systems; sizing and designing for usage in homes and commercial businesses: Solar electric products, applications and the market place; and understanding energy conversion from sunlight to electricity, and working with solar conversion equipment.* The 48-hour course is designed for students to be eligible to obtain the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Photovoltaic (PV) Entry Level Certificate of Knowledge.

For more information about the ACC/SECO project, contact [John Hoffner](#), [Michael Kuhn](#), or [Robert McGoldrick](#), ACC, at (512) 223.7662.



More Local Workshops

The Rhizome Collective presents: R.U.S.T. Radical Urban Sustainability Training

An intensive seminar in urban ecological survival skills:
Exploring the cross-section of permaculture and social activism in building autonomous communities.

Topics and hands-on demos:

Low-tech bioremediation (cleaning contaminated soils using plants, fungi and bacteria)
Rainwater harvesting
Aquaculture: ponds/plants/fish/algae
Constructed wetlands
Passive solar and bicycle windmills
Humanure and worm composting
Biogas and veggie oil biofuels
Soil repair and asphalt removal
Do-it-yourself air purification and food forests
City chickens and micro-livestock
Natural building in the city
Brownfield restoration
Struggles for land and gentrification
Resource privatization
Energy depletion and city futures
Creating autonomous communities
Bikes Across Borders
Independent Media
Books for Prisoners

More course info and registration details:

www.rhizomecollective.org/rust.html

For info or reservations: 512 294 9580 or

events@rhizomecollective.org

Heal Yourself and the Earth through Nature Awareness Experience

Believing that the Earth has been seriously damaged due to human irresponsibility stemming from our detachment from our natural roots, **SBC member Randall Watts** founded **Nature Awareness Experience**. Using his experience as a survival skills instructor, tracker, fitness trainer, and caretaker of the earth, along with the assistance of other instructors, Randall's goal is to create a community of like-minded individuals that want to help reverse this trend of detachment from nature. For those wanting to seek peace and health for our Earth and themselves, there are many learning and volunteer activities scheduled at beautiful Red Corral near Wimberley.

This Sunday, January 15th kicks off three incredible learning experiences: "The Tipi Meditation", "A Morning in the Woods" and "The Caretaker Course". The fee for these events has been waived but donations will be accepted. For details of these events and other upcoming activities and to learn more about Nature Awareness Experience, go to www.natureaware.com and click on "Calendar". Call Randall at 695-0798 if you plan to attend any of the Sunday events.

Green Building Program staff conduct their introductory course
"Green By Design"
Saturday February 4.
Call 482-5300 for registration information.

SBC Coordinators Committee gains new members

The **Coordinators Committee** for **Sustainable Building Coalition** meets once a month to arrange all these wonderful resources and educational opportunities for you. Steering Committee members plan SBC meeting programs, create this newsletter and write or gather the information to put in it, maintain the SBC web site, keep the library and resource bookstore (available at meetings and event booths) stocked and organized, and represent SBC at fairs and community events. This month we introduce two new Steering Committee members. Next month we will introduce some more.

Megan Clark. Hello! I am a columnist for the SBC newsletter and new member of the coordinating team. A proud Ohio native, I recently moved to Austin to pursue a Master of Science in Sustainable Design at UT. After getting a degree in Interior Architecture at Ohio University I attended the Ecosa Institute (www.ecosainstitute.org) and realized my true passion for the research and education of sustainable design. I moved from there to Washington, DC, where I interned with sustainable and non-profit groups, and eventually went to work full-time for Sustainable Design Consulting in Richmond, VA. While there, I became a LEED® Accredited Professional, working on green building research and LEED® credit support. I also had the wonderful opportunity to work on *Ecological Design and Building Schools: Green Guide to Educational Opportunities in the United States and Canada*, a recent publication by the firm's principal, Sandra Leibowitz Earley. Here at SBC I am excited about the many opportunities to explore and share information about sustainable materials, design and principles, particularly in a city with so many positive community resources. I strongly believe that learning is the foundation for doing, and that with it we can fuel great change. meganann@mail.utexas.edu .

Mina Loomis. I am a local consumer with next to no building knowledge or experience. I found SBC in search of ways to apply appropriate technology to my home and life, and volunteered to assemble this newsletter. There is a big disconnect between what is known and done in the alternative building community, and what is known and available to the ordinary consumer. I would like to help break down this barrier. mkloomis@austin.rr.com .

Local Events

Upcoming Austin Progressive Potluckers Event

"Changing the world, one covered dish at a time."

On the web at www.AustinProgressiveCalendar.com/potluck.htm. If you have an idea for a potluck, please email Bruce Kravitz (454-6542 kkravitz@juno.com), Selwyn Polit (926-7876 selwyn@austintx.com), Diane Miller (dianemiller@austin.rr.com)

Saturday, January 28, 6:30-9:00 p.m.* Casa de Luz,* 1701 Toomey Road, Austin

Casa de Luz is a place of gathering for people who are learning how to better integrate their lives and experience more wholeness on all levels. Casa's beautiful campus is home to a wide range of experiences and opportunities to nourish one's mind and body. They are a full educational community center that hosts ongoing classes, guest speakers, live music and provides a meeting place for several of Austin's holistic organizations. At the center of Casa's work is their vision of creating world peace through the awareness of balance as taught within the framework of Macrobiotics and their mission to educate and nourish those traveling through life with a desire to leave things better than they found them. Join us for this unique opportunity to experience a true oasis for wellness in Austin. We will have a brief presentation by Wayo Longoria about the organization's vision and the important role they play in the community. We will also have an opportunity to sample some of the delicious Macrobiotic culinary delights prepared at Casa. As always, this is a potluck event so please bring a dish that serves 6-8 hungry people, and your own drink, plates, utensils and cups.

Directions: Casa De Luz is located at 1701 Toomey Road, which is off Lamar Blvd. just south of the river on the west side, and is just down the road from Zachary Scott Theatre (about .3 miles down on the left). For a map, you can search at <http://maps.google.com/>. For public transportation, go to <http://www.capmetro.org/riding/schedulesandmaps.asp>. To learn more about Casa De Luz, visit <http://www.casadeluz.org/index.htm>

John Muir Coming to Austin

The Sierra Club brings veteran actor Lee Stetson portraying John Muir to Austin for three important events. Austin's environmental troubadour Bill Oliver opens the shows.

Please join us on Saturday, **January 28 at 1pm for a reception/silent auction to meet John Muir. This event benefits the Save Padre Island campaign.

Then at **7pm, Saturday **January 28**, Wild Basin Wilderness Preserve hosts the play "Conversation with a Tramp."

Sunday, **January 29 at 2pm is the play "Spirit of John Muir", also at Wild Basin.

In both plays Lee Stetson recounts Muir's wild adventures in preserving America's wilderness.

Advance tickets are \$12.50. \$15 at the door.

Limited seating is available. Please reserve your tickets now at <http://www.balinsky.com/muir> or call 926-7312 for information.

Austin Green Living and Home Products Expo

January 20-22

Location: Austin Convention Center

Cost: \$7.50 (or free if you volunteer a couple of hours at our SBC booth)

Austin's Only Organic and Green Living Event

~ Discover hard-to-find green building resources

~ Find an amazing selection of all-natural and organic products

~ Shop the Organic Gardening Center

~ See the future of eco-friendly transportation at the Howdy Honda Hybrid Car Showcase

~ Tour the incredible Healthy Smart Green Home, built by Energy Homes, Ltd. on the show floor

Website: <http://www.showtechnology.com>

Central Austin Cohousing

Have you ever dreamed of living in a community committed to ecological principles such as green-building, resource-sharing, and sustainable agriculture? Central Austin Cohousing is in the process of creating an environmentally-minded community on the east side of Austin near the intersection of MLK and 183. Our current design calls for 36 units of living space, 1 common house, 1 office building, and approximately 3 acres of woodlands and open space for taking walks, making gardens, and raising chickens (2 of our members already have some). There will also be a creek along the north end of the property that will flow into a $\frac{3}{4}$ acre pond which will be kept full year-round.

CAC is a diverse group of people interested in living co-operatively while maintaining our private space. We are committed to keeping cars on our perimeter in order to provide peaceful and safe walkways while maximizing our green space. Along with sharing resources such as tools and appliances we plan to offer common meals four times a week.

If this sounds like the kind of community you've been waiting for, check out our website: <http://www.austincohousing.org> and our interactive website: <http://cac.wikihost.org>

Workshops in Other Places

GREEN HOMES 101 workshop.....MOLD

Mold...Moldy Homes...and health...we have heard a lot about mold. We know it's not healthy if mold is growing in our homes. So how do you know if we have it? How do we prevent it? How do we get rid of it? Are all molds bad? Come learn about this and a lot more about mold in Houston homes at CULTIVATE GREEN's next seminar for homeowners, dwellers, and residential related building professionals. Visible and hidden mold growing in our homes is something we need to prevent. Learn why and how.

[Paula Vance, a Houston mold expert, Sue McDonald, and American MoldGuard are our Speakers.](#)

This **free** workshop, Tuesday evening, **January 24th, 6-9 PM**, is being sponsored by Cultivate Green, a non-profit organization being formed by volunteers and incubated by HARC (the Houston Advanced Research Center) to educate Houston area residents (and the home building industry) about how to have healthier homes that also use a lot less energy and how to save money in the process. It is being held at the **Univ. of Houston College of Architecture**, Room 150. If you will be attending, please notify Terri Kurtin (TKurtin@HARC.edu) or call 281.363.7926, so that we will be able to save you a seat.

Light straw-clay events presented by Robert Laporte and/or Paula Baker-Lapaorte in **Santa Fe, NM**:

February 11-16, 6-day EcoNest Workshop - Building for Health Naturally: How to Create an Authentic Home
April 10 - June 30, 12-Wk EcoNest Apprenticeship Program
April 24-30, 7-Day EcoNest Builder Training
April 27-30, 4-Day EcoNest Hands-On Workshop
May 6-7, 2-Day EcoNest Seminar: Turning Your Dream into Reality

Contact: info@econest.com

Econest at www.econest/calendar. Robert Laporte conducts straw/clay workshops of various durations, usually in New Mexico. Look here and see stunning homes from "tiny" to normal size. No nails. Robert uses Japanese-style joinery and you will learn how to do this, too.

The Lama Foundation, outside of **Taos, NM**, offers a week of a series of hands-on green building sessions including earth plasters; straw bale, cob and adobe; ecology and forest restoration, native medicinal plants, renewable energy and more. June 11 - 18.

www.thelamafoundation.com

The Last Straw Journal lists diverse natural building workshops in the **Northwest and Canada**. Go to www.thelaststraw.org for complete information.

Sustainable Building Coalition Coordinators Committee

Programs and site visits: Gayle Borst
Membership: Frieda Rinehart
Community Outreach: Yvonne Hansen
Website Development: Shirley Allaway

Treasurer & Book Seller: Frieda Rinehart
Nonprofit 501(c)(3) Committee: Ken McKenzie
Newsletter Columnists: Megan Clark, Yvonne Hansen
Newsletter Publication: Mina Loomis

All SBC Coordinators are volunteers. If you would like to contact anyone of us by email, visit the contact form on the Greenbuilder website at: <http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/contact>

SBC Membership and Renewals

Sustainable Building Coalition membership is open to builders, architects and anyone desiring to learn about and support sustainable building and development in all of its aspects. Dues are \$35 business member, \$25 paper newsletter member, and \$15 email newsletter members. Members receive the monthly newsletter and admission to all regularly scheduled SBC meetings and site visits. Find a membership application at www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/memberapp.pdf.

Mail applications, dues, and renewals to:

The Sustainable Building Coalition, P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381
or bring to the SBC monthly meeting or event.

"The coalition exists to facilitate the organization and education of the building and design communities and the general public to foster: healthy and ecologically sound built environments - sustainable resource use - responsible and healthy businesses."

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