

The Call of Nature

Laguna Green reflects its owner's environmental epiphany.

Two-and-a-half years ago, Pamela Sterling started a personal journey on what she calls a “pathway of nonviolence.” Part of that was living a life that respected and conserved nature. She wanted a vocation that would revolve around that philosophy and dreamed of opening a showroom focusing on green design.

Sterling didn't have to wait too long.

Last year, she saw the sign she was looking for: a retail space formerly occupied by a bamboo cabinetry company became available on South Coast Highway in Laguna Beach. She left her corporate career, remodeled the space, retained some of the original cabinetry and countertops, then by November, opened an eco-friendly kitchen and bath gallery named Laguna Green.

Sterling knew that it was no small challenge to claim a green identity, because her choices would be subjected to close inspection. “There's so much green-washing out there,” Sterling says. “To me, integrity is essential, so I have to be very vigilant [about which products to carry in the showroom]. Everyone is trying to tell a story about green.”

To guide herself and her customers, she developed what she calls the LEAF rating system for the products: “L” for locally made, meaning within 500 miles of Laguna Beach; “E” for energy and water conservation (preferably with an Energy Star or WaterSense rating); “A” for air quality, meaning it should be formaldehyde-free and/or have no or low volatile organic compounds; “F” for formulation, preferably at least 50% recycled or reclaimed content, or made from rapidly renewable and carefully managed resources.

Each of the products, whether it be Toto's sleek low-flow toilets or IceStone's eye-candy counters, has a LEAF rating from one to four – the more leaves, the greener the product.

“My customers love the beauty of these products and the fact that they are doing something to help the environment,” she says. “But they



PHOTOS BY ED OLEN



also love the story [behind each product]. It's fun and interesting to have a kitchen countertop made with beer bottles and mother-of-pearl, or an elegant bathroom vanity top made of car windshields, or a colorful laundry room surface made from stained glass window fragments.”

The eco-friendly vibe at the showroom is understated and modern, but warm and accessible – like Sterling herself – perhaps because the showroom is more than a business for her. It's a reflection of this time in her life – a journey that can be inspirational to those who walk through Laguna Green's doors.

1025 S. Coast Hwy., Laguna Beach, (949) 340-7727; laguna-green.com

Bestsellers

IceStone and Vetrazzo countertops made of concrete and recycled materials

Keep your eye on

EcoStucco natural limestone plaster



CHRISTIAN DEL ROSARIO

Laguna Green owner Pamela Sterling