

*Celebrity designer Kari Whitman's reputation as an environmentally friendly designer has won her a faithful following of socially conscious homeowners in California, and one of her fans is actress Jessica Alba.*



# Jessica Alba's ECO-FRIENDLY HOME in Hollywood Hills

TEXT MICHELE KOH



**IF ANYONE KNOWS** how to design a home fit for a star, it's Kari Whitman. The celebrity interior designer was the host of American television show, *Designer to the Stars* and has designed homes for celebrities like Mario Lopez, Kurtwood Smith, Virginia Madsen, Don Johnson, Emilio Estevez, Don Henley, Kristen Bell and Jessica Alba.

A frequent traveller, Whitman stays abreast of the latest styles and trends, and her work is influenced by Spanish, Moroccan, Mediterranean and très moderne themes.

When Alba was two months pregnant, she hired Whitman to decorate her private Spanish colonial home in Hollywood Hills. The actress wanted an eclectic and funky Californian bungalow to be totally green. It was also important that her home be comfortable for her two rescue dogs and her new child.

### WORKING ON THE GREEN THEME

Drawing inspiration from Alba's "green ambitions", Whitman used sustainable woods, antiques and repurposed furnishings. She used pleather – an attractive and animal-friendly alternative to leather as upholstery for much of the furniture. "There are so many beautiful pleather options available now, which are both elegant and cruelty-free. You can't scratch or stain it, and you can literally wipe it clean with a sponge," says Whitman. Rather than buy new cabinets to match the updated décor in the kitchen, she faux-wood-grained the existing cabinetry to save trees. "I also had the old kitchen hardware plated with brushed nickel to update the look, saving money and resources. We also installed water savers on all the sinks," she says.

### MATERIALS SAFE FOR EXPECTANT MOTHERS

She used her own line of eco-friendly paint mixing kit called Wall Makeup to mix all of the custom colours, and only used zero-VOC paints throughout the home. "I was especially conscientious about every product we used because Jessica was expecting a baby, but it's important for your pets, too." Eco-friendly synthetic turf was used for the grassy yard and instead of wood, Whitman used a product called Trex — made out of recycled plastic and wood fibers for the outdoor decks and rails. Almost all of the furniture came from vintage and antique stores. The linens in the nursery come from Sage Creek and the sustainable wood furniture is from Bel Bambini. Organic rugs from Calvin Klein were used throughout the home.

The 465 sqm property has four bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, dining room, entertainment room, library and two balconies—one small and one large, as well as a spacious back yard with a pool and patio. The elegant and stylish living room has an old Hollywood feel, with gorgeous custom couches paired with the vintage chairs that Whitman reupholstered. Beautiful custom finished walls take pride in the dining room, while a shiny, cellophane wallpaper beautifies



the ceiling. And dining room furnishings include a dining table constructed from reclaimed teak, chairs covered in faux-ostrich pleather and an antique Murano glass chandelier. And in Alba's kitchen (opposite page), a vintage chandelier over the island and elegant chairs made from sustainable wood and covered with pleather gave it a contemporary touch.

The entertainment room and the bedrooms are not spared either. Eco-friendly fabrics like UltraSuede and Crypton are used for the entertainment room, while colour palettes of sage and brown add a touch of tranquility to the bedrooms, with each room having its own unique personality. For the dogs, Whitman created a "doggy oasis" — where the dogs could relax and be part of the family. And as Whitman could not find any suitable doggy beds, she designed them herself.

"We talked a lot about a space that was serene, soothing, calm. It was important to Alba to create an eco-friendly home for her family that was open and inviting," said Whitman, who indeed succeeded in creating a green and welcoming space. **hc**