



## Celebrity Homes: Eco-Friendly Edition

by [Kristine Hansen](#), Posted Apr 7th 2011 2:00PM

**Celebrity homes are luxe, over-the-top and often expensive. And they're getting greener too, thanks to designer-to-the-stars Kari Whitman.**

Interior designer [Kari Whitman](#) has a very cool job. Not only does she help celebs decorate their homes, she helps them create the green homes of their dreams. "I just don't do anything that's not green," she says. She'll help clients find salvaged or upcycled materials, help them choose non-toxic cleaning products and encourage them to reupholster an old sofa, rather than buy a new one.

"Any time you buy new, we have a problem," says Whitman, who has a knack for giving sparkle to tired old furniture.



Photo: Roger Snider

Whitman shared some of her favorite celeb decorating projects -- the homes of [Jessica Alba](#), [Emilio Estevez](#) and [Virginia Madsen](#) -- and offers up tips to help all of us get a little greener.

#### **Jessica Alba: Decorating With Curbside Finds**

According to Whitman, Jessica Alba, a 29-year-old mom-to-be -- who already has a two-year-old daughter (Honor) with husband Cash Warren -- is gung-ho about creating an eco-friendly home for her family. Right down to the backyard grass that surrounds her outdoor pool. "Jessica is probably the greenest client of all my clients," says Whitman. "She really, really cares about the earth."



Photo: Gareth Cattermole, Getty Images

Alba chose [Forever Lawn](#), a waterless "grass" that's created from recycled tires and has a 15-year guarantee. "It's expensive, but in Beverly Hills if you do something 'green', you get 25 percent off your entire water bill, excluding the pool," says Whitman. As for the pool, Alba opted for saltwater so when the pool is drained, chemicals are not released into the environment.

She's also quick to buy second-hand furnishings. "We were buying stuff off [Craigslist](#) and running down to the antique store. We were even finding stuff on the road that people were throwing away, and we'd take it home and redo it," says Whitman.

Alba paid attention to the smaller details too. To top off her eco-friendly home, Alba chose hemp and bamboo linens throughout her home.

### **Emilio Estevez: An Eco-Friendly Wine Cellar**

Most people don't know that Emilio Estevez, that actor hunk who starred in "The Breakfast Club" and, most recently, "Bobby," doubles as a winemaker. He also owns a small vineyard. When he realized that he needed a wine room to store his oenophile interests -- a tasting area and temperature-controlled aging barrels, and bottles -- he turned to Whitman.



Photo: Henry Cabala

"He's fantastic -- he's my favorite client of all time," says Whitman. "Everything in that room is recycled except for the wine barrels that hold his wine." No-VOC paints were applied to the walls. An antique chandelier hangs from the ceiling. Molding was sourced from a train station in India that was going to be torn down. Whitman recycled a door that used to be the entrance to an antique store in Portugal as the wine room's door. And the piece de resistance? Gym flooring recycled from Stanford University is underfoot.

Together they bought antique smoking chairs and redid them with pleather; Whitman's has an interest in animal-rights activism. "The biggest harm for the environment is the bones of the furniture," says Whitman. "They're not made like they were 10 years ago."



### Virginia Madsen: Green Flooring Fanatic

We know her as "Maya" in the film "Sideways" but until chatting with Whitman I didn't realize how passionate she is about eco-friendly design. "Virginia is pretty green," says Whitman, who started her home's renovation by looking to the floors.



Photo: Chris Covey

The two decided on bamboo flooring sourced from Hawaii for her first floor living room, dining room and entryway. The wood contains palmwood, which is sustainable because a palm tree lives at most 100 years. Whitman took the theme a step further and, taking a sheet of the same material, made a dining room table that converts to a pool table.

And just like with Alba, she encouraged her client to incorporate vintage finds. The women found an old couch online and reupholstered it.

### Celebrity Green Decorating Tips for You

Whitman suggests making your home as sustainable as possible. Here's where to begin:

- 1. If you want an eco-chic kitchen countertop**, choose one made from recycled glass as it offers built-in color and style. Whitman's favorite company is [Coverings Etc.](#) "Amazing products! They come in all different colors and they're all recycled."
- 2. Only use eco-friendly cleaners** and clean often to remove toxic grime and dirt tracked in from the outdoors. "It's very important that you clean everything. [Mrs. Meyer's](#) is the best. I don't know what they put in their products but I just had a friend spill wine on my sofa and it pulled it right out."

**3. The most eco-friendly insulation for the home** is one made from old denim jeans. Not only is it sound-proof but it is 40 percent more effective than most insulation products sold, Whitman says.

**4. For a cozy deck, fence or railing in the yard**, ditch the thought of pure lumber and go with a product containing 12% post-consumer recycled plastic, the rest wood that is pre-consumer recycled. It's called [TimberTech](#).

**5. Opt for no-VOC paints for your walls.** Whitman recommends [SafeCoat](#). Whitman actually developed her own eco-friendly paint-mixing kit called [WallMakeUp](#). "Most of the time the paint chips you get at the store are never the same on your walls."

<http://www.shelterpop.com/2011/04/07/celebrity-homes/>