

# GREEN PRODUCTS GUIDE

A PURCHASER'S GUIDE  
TO ENVIRONMENTALLY  
FRIENDLY PRODUCTS

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO AT BOULDER

*The Vice Chancellor of Administration has recommended this guide for use when purchasing.*

# GREEN PRODUCTS GUIDE

University of Colorado | April 2001

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University of Colorado  
**ENVIRONMENTAL**  
C E N T E R



*This guide is a production of the University of Colorado at Boulder Environmental Center and Recycling Services. Assistance was provided by the Procurement Service Center, CU Bookstore, Facilities Management, Solid Waste Advisory Board, Distribution Center, Printing and Copying Services, Property Services, and the Housing Department. Any listing or discussion of specific products or companies does not imply endorsement by the university. Please address all inquiries to CU Environmental Center, 207 UCB, Boulder, CO 80309 | (303) 492-8308.*

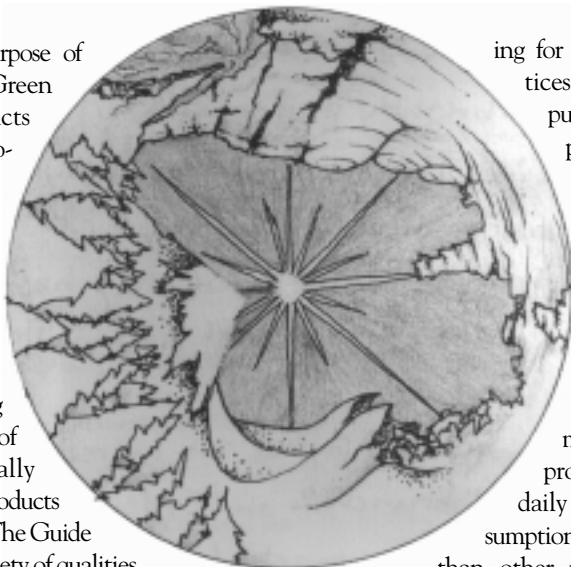
Graphic Design and Layout by Jordan Lewin

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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he purpose of the Green Products

Guide is to provide individuals, campus departments and the campus community with information highlighting what types of environmentally responsible products are available. The Guide addresses a variety of qualities that purchasers should request when ordering these products. Definitions are given for most of the green attributes listed in this guide. These will help explain what is important about each attribute, and help aid in the decision-making process when purchasing.



ing for harmful practices. Therefore, purchasing green products is one of the most influential steps we can take as consumers to reduce our impact on the environment. Green products reduce daily energy consumption, are less toxic than other products, and

they help in “closing the recycling loop” by using recycled materials to make new products. In addition, as demand increases for these products they become more competitive in price, quality and availability when compared to other alternatives.

## **Why is purchasing green products important?**

One of the main impacts CU has on the natural world is through the millions of dollars that the institution spends each year on purchasing products. By carefully choosing what we buy, we can use this purchasing power to encourage the development of environmentally responsible industries, rather than inadvertently pay-

## **What is included in the guide?**

The guide is organized into six categories of products that are frequently purchased by individuals and departments on campus. They are as follows: Paper Products, Office Supplies, Office Equipment, Cleaning Products, Office Furniture, and Small Remodel Supplies.

Within each category, the following items are included:

- ▶ **Brief summary** of some of the environmental concerns when purchasing products for that particular category.
- ▶ **Components**—what specific products are in each category.
- ▶ **Green Attributes**—what qualifies products in the category as environmentally-friendly.
- ▶ **Questions to Ask**—sample questions to provide direction for buyers when looking for these products.
- ▶ **Current Availability**—can these products be found on campus?
- ▶ **Sample Products**—these are specific products we believe will continue to be offered through the university. Due to frequent changes among products and vendors, not all categories include this section.

The second part of this guide is a list of definitions for all of the bolded attributes in the **Green Attributes** sec-

tion. On the last page is contact information for campus purchasing departments and more.

## What is NOT included in this guide?

This guide does not include vendor names or many specific products, because both are apt to change frequently. However, the products you will find through university services (for example CU Bookstore, Printing and Copying, etc.) and on various contracts are offered because there has been consumer demand for them.

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*If you have questions about the availability of specific products, please refer to the contact information listed on the back page. If you would like to purchase a product, but find that it is not available, create consumer demand! Call the vendor or purchasing agent and request it.*

*We hope this will serve as a useful guideline when shopping for green products. Thank you for doing your part to protect the environment!*

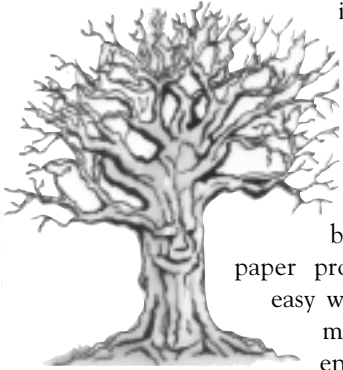


# REMEMBER TO ASK FOR GREEN PRODUCTS WHEN PURCHASING

# GREEN PRODUCTS CATEGORIES

## PAPER PRODUCTS

If decreasing forests, increasing landfills and chemicals in the environment are areas that concern you, buying green paper products is an easy way for you to make a difference.



### Components:

Printing, copy and fax paper, letterhead, notebooks, folders, and envelopes, calendars and disposables (napkins, toilet paper, paper towels, etc.).

### Green Attributes:

High **post-consumer recycled content**,\* **tree free** materials, **Totally Chlorine Free (TCF)** or **Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF)** bleaching process (see **Alternative Bleaching Processes**), no bright, dark, or deeply dyed paper.

### Questions to ask:

- ▶ Which paper products are made with high post-consumer content, and/or manufactured with recycled or tree free materials?

- ▶ Are any of the paper products you offer produced in a way that avoids the use of environmentally harmful chemicals or processes, for example Elemental Chlorine Free bleaching?

### Current Availability:

Recycled Paper Products are widely available. On campus, the Bookstore, Printing and Copying Services, and Distribution Center provide these products. Request them any time you order paper products. A growing number of off-campus suppliers also carry recycled products.

### Sample Products:

- ▶ Eureka 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Content 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x11 Paper
- ▶ Eureka 30% Post-Consumer Recycled Content 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x11 Paper
- ▶ Xerox 30% Recycled Content 8<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>x11 Paper
- ▶ Top Flight 60% Recycled Content (35% Post-Consumer) Notebooks
- ▶ Quality Park 100% Post-Consumer Recycled Content Envelopes

*\*NOTE: "Recycled" does not always mean that a product contains 100% recovered content or that the content is post-consumer materials. Therefore, it is important to specify that you would like products with high post-consumer (preferably 100%) recycled content. See definitions on page 8 for further clarification.*



Landfill | ©Earthbase

non-toxic or have low or no VOC's?

### **Current Availability:**

Office products with green attributes are available both on and off campus. Look carefully at the labels and request them if you are uncertain.

## **OFFICE SUPPLIES**

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Are you concerned about overfilled landfills and chemicals in the environment? If yes, check out some of the attributes that make office supplies greener.

### **Components:**

Computer diskettes, trash and recycle bins, desk organizers, tape dispensers, correction fluid and printer toner cartridges).

### **Green Attributes:**

Manufactured with **recycled content** (plastic or steel for desk organizers and trash and recycling bins) and/or **post-consumer content, non-toxic, Low or No Volatile Organic Compound's (VOC's)**, (correction fluid, glue) remanufactured (toner cartridges).

### **Questions to ask:**

- ▶ Are any of the office supply products made with plastic or paper manufactured with recycled content or high post-consumer content?
- ▶ Which glues or correction fluids are

### **Sample Products:**

- ▶ Green Disks
- ▶ 3M Transparencies (50% recycled content)

## **OFFICE EQUIPMENT**

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Have you been reading about and experiencing an increase in your utility bills? Are you worried about the potential effects of global

warming? Are you concerned about the increasing energy use here on campus? Buying green office equipment that uses LESS energy is a perfect way to be a positive influence.



### **Components:**

Computers, printers, fax machines, and copiers.

### **Green Attributes:**

**“Energy Star” label** (products that meet the Environmental Protection

Agency's (EPA) standards for energy efficiency), **energy efficient, Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) vs. Cathode Ray Tube (CRT)** monitors.

### Questions to ask:

- ▶ Do you offer office equipment with the Energy Star label?
- ▶ Do you have computer monitors or laptops that are LCD rather than CRT?

### Current Availability:

Available through individual vendors and State Contract. Departments also have the option to lease office equipment. Energy Star labeling for office equipment is standard for the majority of office equipment, however it is important to specify this attribute when purchasing office equipment.

### Sample Products:

- ▶ Products with the Energy Star label

## CLEANING PRODUCTS

One of the many ways that toxic chemicals enter our environment is through the cleaning products that we use. If you would like to change the cleaning products you use, the following can be used as a guideline to purchasing less toxic products.

### Components:

Window, desk, bathroom, and floor cleaners, dishwashing liquid, air fresheners, and disinfectants.

### Green Attributes:

**Non-toxic**, (for example no ammonia) not tested on animals, ingredients that are derived from renewable

resources (for example vegetable as opposed to petroleum), **biodegradable**, not **solvent based**.

### Questions to ask:

- ▶ Do you offer any brands of cleaning products that are non-toxic or not solvent based?
- ▶ What cleaning products are biodegradable?

### Current Availability:

Most vendors that offer cleaning supplies have green alternatives.

## OFFICE FURNITURE

If preserving forests and maintaining forest practices that are sustainable (which means not using more than the forest can produce) is important to you, purchasing green office furniture is a good step toward this goal.

### Components:

Chairs, desks, file cabinets, and bookshelves.

### Green Attributes:

Used furniture, no **old growth** wood, derived from **sustainably harvested materials, recycled content**.



Clearcut | ©Earthbase

## Questions to ask:

- ▶ Are any of your plastic or steel products made with recycled content?
- ▶ Do you offer wood products made with no old growth wood, or derived from sustainably harvested materials?

Purchasing used furniture is always an environmentally friendly alternative!

## Current Availability:

State Contracting requires CU departments to use Juniper Valley for all office furniture. If they do not offer greener alternatives, express your interest in green products, and let them know there is a consumer demand for them. Alternatively, departments can purchase used furniture on campus from Property Services.

# SMALL REMODEL SUPPLIES

There are a variety of products in this category. Depending on what you are purchasing, you could be helping to reduce chemical

exposure in the environment, reduce energy use on campus, or reduce the amount of waste entered into the landfill.

## Components:

Paints, finishes, stains, adhesives, flooring and lighting

## Green Attributes:

**Non-toxic** (for example no Formaldehyde or solvents) and/or **Low or No Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's)** (for paints, adhesives), **energy efficient**, **recycled content**.

## Questions to ask:

- ▶ Do you offer paints that are non-toxic or have low or no VOC's?
- ▶ What types of lighting (lamps, ballasts) are the most energy efficient?
- ▶ Are any of the carpets you offer made with recycled content?

## Current Availability:

CU does not have a contract with one company. Instead, CU hires contractors for small remodels and small construction projects. Project managers can specify or request paints with low or no VOC's, recycled content carpets, energy efficient lighting, and other green products.





# GREEN ATTRIBUTE DEFINITIONS

**ALTERNATIVE BLEACHING PROCESSES:** Bleaching is the process used to whiten paper. Chlorine bleaching, which produces toxic dioxins, is currently the most common bleaching method used. Dioxins have been linked to cancer and birth defects in laboratory studies. There are several other bleaching techniques that either reduce or eliminate the emission of dioxins, which are as follows:

- ▶ **ELEMENTAL CHLORINE FREE (ECF):** A bleaching process that substitutes chlorine dioxide or other chlorine compounds for elemental chlorine gas.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ **TOTALLY CHLORINE FREE (TCF):** A bleaching process that introduces no chlorine into the bleaching stage, using instead oxygen, hydrogen peroxide, and ozone to separate and whiten fibers.<sup>1</sup>

**BIODEGRADABLE:** Describes a material or liquid that is capable of breaking down by natural processes.

**ENERGY EFFICIENT:** Products that are energy efficient use less energy and therefore produce less pollution than conventional products. In addition, using these products can save you money by lowering your monthly energy bill.

**ENERGY STAR LABEL:** The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has established energy efficiency criteria for office products that employ Low-Power mode conditions to reduce energy consumption and emissions. The Low-Power Mode refers to the lowest power state the product can automatically enter within some period of product inactivity, without actually turning off. Energy Star equipment reduces pollution, lowers your energy bill, generates less heat, and has a longer life span than other equipment.<sup>2</sup> Note that you often must configure your equipment to use the low-power mode to get the full benefit of this feature.



**LOW-VOC:** Low odor, vapor density is lighter than air and emits fewer volatile organic compounds (VOC's) and other toxins.

**LCD vs. CRT:** Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) monitors and laptops use less energy and put out less heat, than Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) monitors.

**NON-TOXIC:** A substance or mixture of substances that is less likely to harm humans or other living organisms from airborne or skin contact in the environment. There are many toxic chemicals in the products we use; formaldehyde, ammonia, and solvents are just a few. For more information on chemicals, please contact the Environmental Operations Manager for Facilities Management. (Contact information on back page.)

**OLD GROWTH:** 250-500 year-old trees with a mixed canopy (trees in various stages) including down trees (trees that have fallen and are decaying). Among other attributes, old growth forests provide a variety of different habitats and nutrients.

**POST-CONSUMER MATERIAL:** Any material that has served its intended use as a consumer item, and has been recovered from the solid waste stream. Buying products with a high percentage of post-consumer material rather than **pre-consumer** material stimulates demand for recycling collection programs, like CU's.

**PRE-CONSUMER MATERIAL:** Any material generated by manufacturers and product converters such as trimmings, damaged products, and overruns.

**RECYCLABLE:** A product that is recyclable has the potential to be recycled and used again to make new products.

**RECYCLED CONTENT:** An item that contains some **pre-consumer** or **post-consumer** content. Read the label carefully to verify the percentage of post-consumer content.

**SOLVENT BASED:** Solvents are one of the causes of volatile organic compounds (see **Low VOC** for definition). Look instead for water, vegetable, or citric bases.

**SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED MATERIALS:** Wood-based products derived from selective harvesting which improves/sustains the long-term old growth structure of a forest.<sup>1</sup> There are only a few legitimate certification groups for sustainably harvested materials. One of the most respected is the FSC (Forestry Stewardship Council) certification.

**TREE-FREE:** Non-wood, alternative fibers primarily derived from annual crops, either grown intentionally for paper or abundant by-products of food and fiber production. Because they only grow for one season, these crops do not develop the high levels of lignins that bind tree cellulose fibers together. This means tree-free fibers can be pulped with significantly fewer chemicals, fewer stages of bleaching, using less energy and water, making tree-free fibers more environmentally advantageous than wood-based varieties. Most of these crops can be blended with post-consumer materials to create quality papers for a variety of applications. Examples include Bamboo, Kenaf, and Hemp.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The SimpleLife Guide to Tree-Free, Recycled and Certified Papers, 1999.*  
Author: Dan Inhof, [info@simplelife.com](mailto:info@simplelife.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.labeling@energystar.gov](http://www.labeling@energystar.gov)

# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Questions | Comments | Concerns

*Please call the following departments for specific information on what green products are currently available.*

### **CU Bookstore** (303) 492-3425 | <http://cubooks.colorado.edu>

Offers green office supplies and recycled paper (including 100% post-consumer) through store in the UMC and catalog. Website for campus department on-line ordering and delivery within 24 hours:  
<http://cubooks.colorado.edu/books/supplies/cop.html>

### **CU Environmental Center** (303) 492-8308 | <http://www.colorado.edu/ecenter>

On-campus resource for promoting environmental awareness among students, faculty, staff, and the broader community. In addition, the Environmental Center assesses and works to improve the environmental performance of the university.

### **CU Recycling** (303) 492-8307 | <http://www.colorado.edu/cure>

One of the leading campus recycling programs in the country, its mission is to divert recyclables from the waste stream cost-effectively while promoting the benefits of recycling and resource conservation. CU Recycling operates as a partnership between the student government (UCSU), Facilities Management, and Housing.

### **Distribution Center** (303) 492-6322 | <http://stripe.colorado.edu/~propman>

Offers several types of recycled paper, including 100% and 30% post-consumer content and will recycle pallets (call for pick up).

### **Printing and Copying Services** (303) 492-2679 | <http://www.colorado.edu/printcopy>

Five locations on campus that all provide environmentally responsive printing and copying. Continues to be a campus leader in offering recycled paper including 100% post-consumer content paper and 30% post-consumer CU letterhead.

### **Property Services/Surplus Properties** (303) 492-6524 | <http://stripe.colorado.edu/~propman>

Recycles old equipment (office equipment, furniture and other various items) through resale and others.

### **Procurement Service Center Help Desk** (303) 724-4772 | <http://www.cu.edu/psc>

Responsible for purchasing, accounts payable, travel, and procurement cards for the university. Website with contact information for Procurement Service Center purchasing agents:  
<http://www.cu.edu/psc/Purchasing/who-buys02/who-buys02.html>

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*For information on where to recycle materials call the following service centers:*

### **CU Recycling** (303) 492-8307

Visit <http://www.colorado.edu/cure> for on-campus recycling information.

### **EcoCycle** (303) 444-6634 |

<http://www.ecocycle.org>

Community-based recycling.

### **Recycle Boulder Hotline** (303) 441-4234

Information on curbside recycling in Boulder.

### **Colorado Materials Exchange (CoMex)**

(303) 492-4330 | <http://colorado.edu/cure/comex>

CoMex is a non-profit on-line bulletin board that coordinates the exchange of durable goods between businesses that have surplus materials to business and community groups who could use them.

*For more information on toxic chemicals:*

**CU's Environmental Operations  
Manager for Facilities Management**  
(303) 492-5321

*To view the Green Products Guide on line, visit:*

**EC Web site** <http://www.colorado.edu/ecenter>