

EARTH MATTERS

Jury still out on whether paints insulate

E/The Environmental Magazine

Question: Do insulating paints actually insulate and save energy? If they do, are they environmentally friendly?

Answer: Paint additives that claim insulating qualities have been marketed since the late 1990s, but energy research organizations have not confirmed their insulating value.

For its part, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency does not recommend using paints or coatings in place of traditional bulk insulation.

According to the Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the use of so-called insulated paints is in most cases "difficult to justify on the basis of savings in energy costs alone."

Meanwhile, the nonprofit Energy-Ideas Clearinghouse found that under ideal circumstances insulating paints can achieve a "reduction in heat gain" of around 20 percent on freshly painted sun-exposed walls, but notes that such walls will only face direct sunlight for a limited part of even the clearest summer day.

Also, the clearinghouse reports that "heat gain reductions ... are significant only for sun-bathed surfaces" and that the "reflectivity of the painted surface generally declines considerably with time."

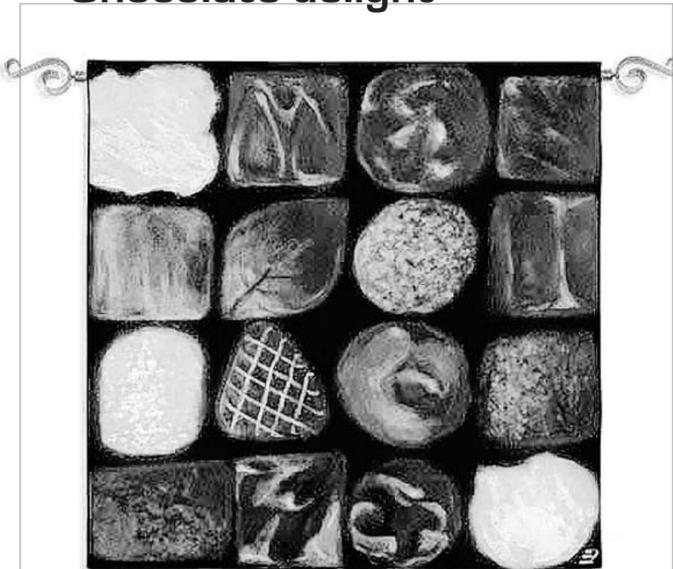
Alex Wilson of BuildingGreen.com is not a fan of insulating paints: "To say that there is a lot of hype about insulating paints ... is an understatement," he tells the Web site Treehugger.com. "The Internet is rife with claims of paints that dramatically reduce heat transfer - usually based on some technological magic spun off from NASA. While these products may have some relevance in the extreme conditions of outer space, manufacturers of paints containing (insulating additives) are making claims that defy the laws of physics...when they claim they can save significant energy in buildings."

Nevertheless, for certain applications, especially in concert with traditional forms of insulation underneath, insulating paint can help reduce energy expenditures and air conditioning bills accordingly. For those who want to forge ahead with insulating paint despite the limited benefits, some of the leading brands to look for include Insuladd, Hy-Tech, Therma-Guard and Eagle Coatings' SuperTherm.

TOP DRAWER

By Amy Howell / ahowell@enquirer.com

Chocolate delight



Provided photos

The title of this wall tapestry - "My Future Thighs" - is just as charming as its delicious content and neutral colors.

The 53-by-53-inch woven tapestry features the work of Ketra Oberlander, an acclaimed blind painter and the founder of Art of Possibility Studios, a licensing company that helps artists with disabilities turn their talents into a career.

The image of a box of chocolates is from Oberlander's "Chocolates" series of paintings.

\$179 at the Art of Possibility Studios online store at www.aopstudios.com.

Tool: Propane monitor



The drinks are served, the chairs are pulled up and guests have just settled in around a tabletop firepit when the propane-powered flames flicker, shrink, then die.

This is the unfortunate scenario, personally encountered just a few weeks ago, that the Gas-Watch gauge aims to eliminate.

The propane level indicator, which connects between the regulator and the tank, has a glow-in-the-dark dial that displays when your gas supply is in the green, when it's low and - when it reaches the red - when you have 15 minutes left. The gauge can be used on propane tanks up to 40 pounds and works with outdoor propane appliances with GCC Type 1 connections - found on most grills and firepits. If a leak occurs, the built-in detector will limit the flow of propane to prevent the appliance from lighting. \$19.95 at Lowe's, Home Depot, Sears, Kmart, Ace Hardware and True Value stores.

Amy Howell

Textile Studio liquidation sale set

The Textile Studio is having a bankruptcy liquidation sale at its Fairfax/Mariemont warehouse at 3714 Jonlen Drive, off Old Wooster Pike (across from the Keebler bakery).

The sale includes high-end upholstery for \$4 a yard, mohair for \$20 a yard, Kravet ultrasuede for \$10 a yard, 50 percent off designer drapery hardware, tassels for \$1-\$3, large rolls of ribbon for \$2 and 50-75 percent off trims.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Credit cards and cash will be accepted, with no returns or refunds. The sale is expected to end by mid-July. Information: thetextilestudio@gmail.com; 513-271-4106.

Sense of relaxation



This candle is like a little entertainment unit for the senses.

Colorfusion's Spa Deluxe flameless candle has a vanilla scent, a rainbow of color-changing light and the surprising bonus of five nature sounds - ocean surf, waterfall, babbling brook, rain and thunder and "birds in the morning."

Controls operate the sounds and volume and allow you to hold one color in the light show or switch to flickering candlelight. Lavender and ocean mist scents are also available. The 4 1/4 -inch-tall candle - which runs on three AAA batteries (included) - retails for \$12.99 through Walgreens, Kmart and www.homedepot.com.

Tomato Rx

Aphids on your tomato plants? Try this "insecticidal soap" recipe from the Cincinnati Horticultural Society.

Mix 1 to 2 tablespoons of dishwashing liquid to 1 gallon of water (or 1 1/2 teaspoons of dishwashing liquid to 1 quart of water). It's best to use a soap without chemicals, such as Ecover, which is usually found in health food stores.

You can also purchase insecticidal soap - including veggie-friendly products from Safer Brand or Ortho's new EcoSense line - at garden centers.

"Blossom end rot" is a symptom of calcium deficiency that looks like a big, black/gray blob on the bottom of a tomato. It's usually attributed to swings in soil moisture (inconsistent watering) or over-pruning.

- Remove and discard the affected fruit.
- Water plants consistently and evenly, without soaking them and without letting the soil dry out between watering.
- Mulch around the base of the plant to hold in moisture and warmth.

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