

# GREEN POINT DESIGN

*Sustainable • Architecture*

## Healthy Homes

Spring is a beautiful time of year in Victoria. Once the wattles and daffodils have bloomed, we know it is time for the forest to come alive with wildflowers, and our gardens to begin their seasonal displays.

For those of us who suffer from allergies or asthma, spring may also be a time when we experience more symptoms. In addition to recognising your own allergy triggers and having a plan in place to cope with the worst, there are a number of things that can be done in and around the home to make it a more pleasant place to be.

Dust mites and airborne house dust, pollen, bacteria, mould spores and fungi can all cause problems for us. Many of these allergens prefer warm, dark, and humid environments. Luckily, we humans like the opposite. If we ensure that our homes are fresh, bright and well ventilated we will be well on the way to having a healthful place to live.

If you are building or renovating, locate windows to the north to maximise light and warmth from the sun. Raising air temperature will decrease the amount of moisture and condensation on the walls and other surfaces. Insulating the walls and ceiling with foil or polyester insulating products will help retain warmth while limiting airborne dust particles. Choose natural and easily cleanable floor finishes like tile, polished concrete, linoleum, cork, or timber. Ensure that extraction fans remove moist air directly to the outside, and, if possible, install a ducted vacuum system to completely remove dust from the house.

Upholstered furniture and bed mattresses can harbour dust and dust mites. Consider cane, leather and timber furniture and put dust covers on mattresses and pillows. If pets are kept inside, keep them well washed, and preferably exclude them from sleeping areas.

Some indoor plants can contribute significantly to airborne pollen and spores. Avoid ferns, and favour broadleaf plants. In the garden, flowering bee-pollinated plants like camellias, azaleas, and rhododendrons release less pollen into the air than wind pollinated plants.

Spring is a good time to get rid of the winter's cobwebs and generally freshen and declutter the house. A time to get into good habits for the rest of the year. If only we could resist the temptation of the many outdoor spring activities - the walks, the markets, the outdoor cafes - we will get straight to it. If only...

*Eric Zehrung, Architect can be contacted at Green Point Design on (03) 5338 8260*

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320 NEILL STREET  
BALLARAT VIC 3350  
TEL (03) 5338 8260

[eric@greenpointdesign.com.au](mailto:eric@greenpointdesign.com.au)



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ERIC ZEHRUNG, B ARCH, AIA  
GREEN POINT DESIGN PTY LTD  
ABN 96 088 099 549

[www.greenpointdesign.com.au](http://www.greenpointdesign.com.au)