



"Everything about this house is very minimalistic," designer Anthony Brenner said.

Breathing easy at 3,600 feet

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Outstanding but not standing out

A hard climb up a steep driveway takes visitors to the house, whose light-colored walls blend in nicely with the sky. At an elevation of close to 3,600 feet, the house sits lower than the peak so that it doesn't stand out from below. From the decks, Karon and Russ can see into Riceville and overlook the Beaverdam Valley.

First choice for second chances

Retaining walls are composed of inexpensive 2,500-pound pieces of reclaimed concrete. The house has reclaimed steel beams; double-pane, argon-filled windows recovered from the Grove Park Inn and flooring milled from trees on the property. The Hempcrete exterior walls, supplied by the Asheville company Hemp Technologies, are made from lime and the husk of the hemp plant. One-foot thick, they are fireproof and have an R value of 30.

Warming to high efficiency

Windows on the south side provide some of the heat, which is augmented by a high-efficiency Buck stove and a Goodman propane furnace. Sitting more than 1,000 feet higher than Asheville, the house can experience temperatures as much as 16 degrees colder than the Beaverdam Valley. "We can sit in here at night," Russ said of his house, "and it's 30 degrees outside and it's 70 degrees in here."

Waking up to wildlife

Bought from a contractor who wasn't using it, the flooring in the decks and the master bedroom is ipe, also known as iron wood. Standing high in the enclosing forest, the deck outside the living room is where Karon and Russ have many of their suppers and lots of their breakfasts. From there, they can see bears roaming through



Passive solar and a very efficient woodstove will keep Russ and Karon's home toasty this winter.

TO VIEW A VIDEO AND PHOTO GALLERY OF THE HOUSE, VISIT CITIZEN-TIMES.COM.

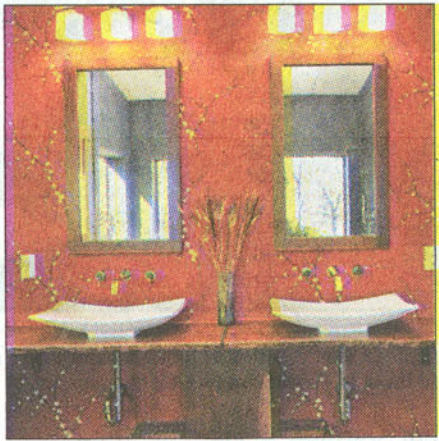
the woods. Bears sometimes trip the wireless alarm, often in the middle of the night.

'Consider the options'

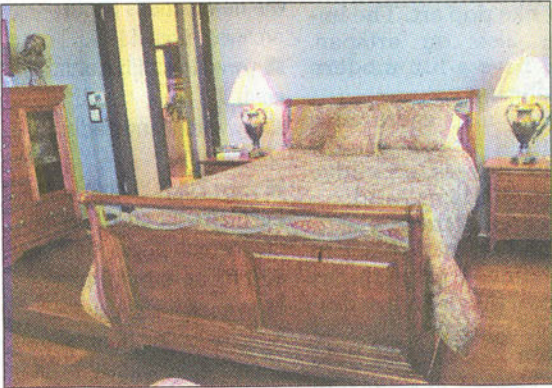
It wasn't easy building a hemp house "because we had to get the county to sign off on a new technology," Karon said. "But if you consider the options — keep cutting trees down — (growing hemp) could help American farmers. It makes perfect sense that this is what should be done."



The livelihoods of a lot of farmers would be improved if they were allowed to grow hemp, Russ Martin and Karon Korp believe.



The vanity under the master bathroom sinks is a piece of reclaimed black walnut.



The floor in the master bedroom is ipe, a wood known for its insect resistance and durability.

NUTS & BOLTS

The home: A 3,000-square-foot three-bedroom, 2 1/2-bath house on Town Mountain Road whose exterior walls are thick, warm, fireproof and made of hemp.

The homeowners: Author Karon Korp has her own publishing and consulting company, Magic Mountain Press. Husband Russ Martin, a former two-term Asheville mayor, is a retired financial consultant.

Defining aspect: As green as can be environmentally, the house looks into the woods to the south, as well as over Riceville and into the Beaverdam Valley.

THE TEAM

Designer: Anthony Brenner, Push Design, Asheville
Builder: David Donahue, Donahue & Joseph Builders, Asheville



The view from the deck off the living room takes in a lot of mountains.

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First in nation: *a house made of hemp*



Karon Korp and Russ Martin researched a lot of types of construction for the house they wanted to build on Town Mountain. They settled on hemp — and not just because it would make their house the first in the nation to be built of the material.

They chose hemp for the walls because it's superstrong and has a life span of 800 years. And it breathes.

"One thing that makes this house so special is everything we used is breathable. So there's no risk of mold or mildew," Russ said.

"The walls will eventually petrify,"

house designer Anthony Brenner said. "And then you can compost them."

Hemp, distantly related to marijuana, is illegal to grow in the United States. Hempcrete is imported from Europe.

Russ and Karon's house is also the first home in North America to use Purepanel, a core panel material made of recycled paper. Skinned with Magnum board (a mineral-based, nontoxic substitute for drywall), the interior walls are breathable, fireproof, waterproof and mold-, mildew- and termite-resistant. And they're extremely strong.

Brenner started designing and building toxin-free homes because of his 8-year-old daughter, who has a rare neurological disorder that makes her extremely sensitive to environmental and chemical contaminants.

"I believe the homes we live in significantly affect the short- and long-term health of our families," Brenner said.

TOUR THE HOME OF THE WEEK ON PAGE D4.

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ASK A GARDENER



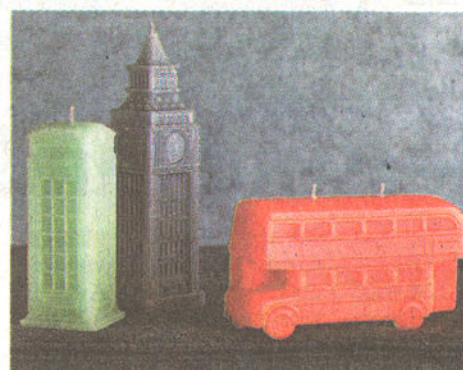
Spanish moss is easy to grow, as on this oak tree. **PAGE D2**

CHICKEN CROQUETTES



These chicken and sweet potato croquettes with red pepper relish have little to hide, and they have great taste too. **PAGE D5**

LOOK OF LONDON



These British inspired novelty candles give the London look to home decor. **PAGE D6**



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