

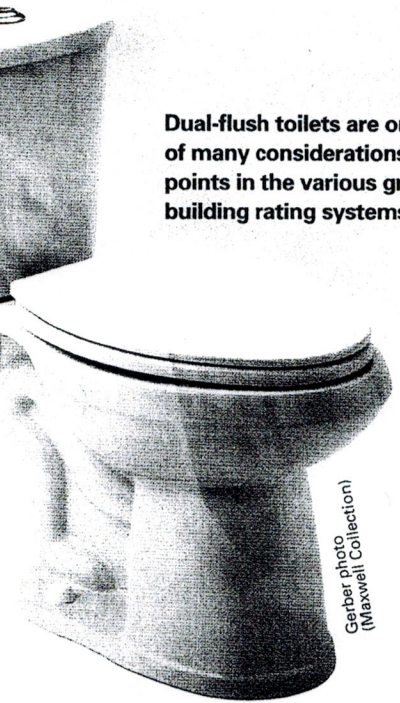
# green-certified houses

Dual-flush toilets are one of many considerations for points in the various green-building rating systems.

Far more common than either of these two types of houses are those certified under one of several green-rating systems. The best known is LEED for Homes (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a child of the U.S. Green Building Council. A similar program developed by the International Code Council and others is called the National Green Building Standard. There also are many local and regional programs.

Both of the national systems offer four levels of certification, depending on

how many points are accumulated in a number of different categories. Unlike net-zero or Passive House, these complicated rating systems take into account all aspects of construction, from site planning to the use of recycled building materials and reduced energy use. Builders and designers work with a score sheet as they go, racking up points with various building strategies in an effort to win a particular rating. There are a number of prerequisites for which no points are awarded.



Although the programs differ in details, they share a number of broad goals:

- **Lower energy consumption.**
- **High durability.**

- **Resource conservation**, meaning that fewer natural resources are used in construction. The use of recycled building materials, materials that contain recycled content, products made from renewable sources and locally sourced materials all are rewarded.
- **Minimal environmental impact.** Houses must be sited so as not to disturb the site; construction should be planned to minimize impact on the site.
- **High indoor environmental quality.** Finishes with low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), for example, are encouraged.
- **Water conservation.** This can include anything from the choice of native plants for landscaping thereby reducing the need for irrigation to specifying dual-flush toilets and low-flow showerheads.



40 - 49

50 - 59

60 - 79

80+

The U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification has four levels.

The advantage of using any of these programs is that you know what you are getting. It's one thing for a builder to call a house "green" and something else altogether when a house has been certified to a particular level of construction under a known set of rules.

Whether you're aiming for net-zero, Passive House or LEED-certified, a key consideration is choosing the right designer and builder. None of these goals is realistic unless the builder understands both the theory and practice of how to get there. Building techniques are exacting and early planning is essential. ▪