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### Houses Within Reach

For Michael Jantzen, sustainable solutions don't always have to come from the creation of new products, materials or savoir faire, but are already within arm's reach. One just needs to look at what's already out there, but with a different perspective. For his latest project, Homestead House, Jantzen explored the possibilities underlying agricultural buildings. He considered the steel, prefabricated, modular, high-strength, low-cost arch building systems normally used for agricultural purposes, and turned them into sustainable alternative housing systems. Homestead House requires very little material to build its strong protective shell. The steel arches and straight panels are constructed from thin recyclable steel sheets that can be easily assembled. The whole building system is extremely modular, allowing one to recycle the house by dismantling its parts and erecting them again in a different location. Homestead House is also energy self-efficient. Its photovoltaic cells and small wind turbines generate electricity and heat, and allow the unit to function off the utility grid. Rainwater is collected and stored in containers below ground. In a world increasingly dependent on man-made energy, this autonomous unit certainly stands out. Let's just hope the model finds application in everyday life. [www.michaeljantzen.com](http://www.michaeljantzen.com)



### Urban Veggies

Goode Green and Urban Farmers have taken the term 'urban agriculture' to another level with their latest project in New York. In April this year, Goode Green installed the first 6,000sq ft green-roof farm atop an old warehouse in Brooklyn. The New-York based green roof design and installation firm had to use a crane to hoist over 200,000 pounds of soil and materials onto the roof. Since then Annie Novak and Ben Flanner of Rooftop Farms have been taking care of the urban farm, planting seeds and cultivating different vegetables. They now deliver their fresh produce to local restaurants, in answer to the growing demand for local foods. Long may this trend live. [www.goodegreennyc.com](http://www.goodegreennyc.com)



### Second Life

It doesn't matter if one is looking at Sarah Turner's lamps from a distance or up-close; the difficulty of guessing what they are made of remains. The UK-based designer has successfully transformed plastic bottles of Coca Cola, Sprite, Oasis and similar drinks into modern, fancy shades for table, floor and ceiling lamps. "The bottles are collected, cleaned, sandblasted and then transformed into beautiful, decorative shapes," explains the young designer. "These are then screwed into the inner shade which is made from recycled card and secured with their own bottle top." Turner, who recently graduated from Nottingham Trent University, was awarded second place in the Innovation Nation competition at the Ideal Home Show 2009. Her lampshade collection is available for purchase via her website. [www.sarahturner.co.uk](http://www.sarahturner.co.uk)



### Sustainable Comeback

When discussing the impact of their work on the environment, the construction and design industries too often focus on how to improve sustainability only in new constructions. The question of what can be done with existing buildings is usually left behind. Not in the case of one of the world's most iconic buildings, however. Completed in the 1970s, the Sears Tower in Chicago, Illinois, was for 14 years the world's tallest building. Confronted by the alarming fact that buildings are the world's largest contributor to carbon emissions, the Sears Tower owners and management group decided to take the bull by the horns. The building will undergo major sustainable modernisation in the coming months. The aim is to reach a saving of 80 percent of the base building electricity usage. Sustainability plans for the structure call for a window replacement and glazing programme, the installation of new gas boilers that utilise fuel cell technologies, and the installation of a lighting control system that automatically dims lights in tenant spaces based on the amount of sunlight entering through the windows. The building will also have its fair share of renewable energy technologies. Wind turbines and solar hot-water panels will help produce energy and hot water for the building while green roofs will help reduce stormwater runoff, improve insulation and mitigate the urban heat island effect around the building. [www.searstower.com](http://www.searstower.com)