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Welcome To My Tree House

If you are looking to take efficiency and ‘going green’ to the next level, what better way to do it than by using the trees on your own property to build your house?

This is exactly what one couple had in mind when they hired local design/builder David Coulson to build their custom home in the Cowichan Valley.

Coulson says that Douglas firs from the 5-acre property accounted for approximately 75% of the building materials for the house. Where was the wood used? Where wasn’t it used is the

easier question to answer. Those homegrown Douglas firs supplied all of the timber work: 3500 sq. ft. of exterior soffit overhangs, decorative fencing, a rear pergola, and all siding to both the house and four-bay garage and guest suite. Interior details include custom wall panelling, railings, interior trim, flooring, and floor to ceiling library shelving.

“One detail that stands out in the design is the use of custom-made posts and beams, both for structural support and aesthetics,” explains Coulson. His team milled the wood into extraordinary lengths, with some of the 68 posts and beams, as large as 8”x18”x 24 feet! “With convenient access to the raw building materials, we were able to have

it milled, dried, and checked early at a local facility (within 2 miles!) and ready to go with no damage and minimal environmental impact from transport.” Kind of like a 100-mile diet for home construction.

You’re thinking the cost of such a project might prohibit the average homeowner from trying this with their own trees? Good news: “The owners saved about 75 cents on the dollar for all of these materials,” explains Coulson. “It’s important to note that these were trees they had intended to clear anyway, to allow for better views and to gain more sun exposure for their garden.”

In addition to recycling the Douglas firs, the house has rain chains feeding all nearby garden



beds and uses a ground-source geo-exchange heating and cooling system. The combination of local materials, green technology, and the simple practice of rain-water recycling and good water management make it fit for 21st-century green living standards.

This project was recognized with Honourable Mention for Structure and Planning in the 2010 North Cowichan Planning Awards, and noted for its “wow factor” by Mayor Tom Walker.



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