

## Understanding Green Terminology

Some critics of Green cleaning say that one of their concerns, which often adds negative feelings toward the movement, is that Green terminology is unclear. How one expert defines “Green” is not necessarily how another expert may define it.

Jansan distributors who stock Green cleaning products should be aware of this concern so they can help customers identify and understand Green cleaning products and end any confusion. Invariably, once customers are clear about the terms, they can make intelligent purchasing decisions, which usually results in increased distributor sales.

Below are some common Green cleaning terms that are associated with the ongoing trend toward environmentally preferable cleaning products; be sure to provide customers with the following tools so they can make knowledgeable decisions.

**Green** is used to describe cleaning products, building materials, and scores of other products designed and manufactured with minimal negative impact to the environment. Compared to similar conventional products, Green products have a significantly reduced impact on human health, the environment and emphasize conservation of resources, energy efficiency, and healthful interior spaces.

**Sustainability** refers to the concept that the use of products or ingredients today will not compromise their use for future generations. Sustainability is measured in three interdependent dimensions—the environment, economics, and society—often referred to as the triple bottom line. The concept of sustainability can be traced back to President Theodore Roosevelt, who stated in 1910, “I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.”

**Sick Building Syndrome**, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, is defined as “situations in which building occupants experience acute health and/or comfort effects that appear to be linked to time spent in a particular building, but where no specific illness or cause can be identified. The complaints may be localized in a particular room or zone, or may be spread throughout the building.”

**Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC)** evaporate at room temperature, causing poor indoor air quality, and are often hazardous to human health. Sources of VOCs include solvents, cleaning products, and paints, among many others. Many materials commonly used in building construction, such as carpets and furniture, also emit VOCs.

**Eco-friendly** is a term distributors should probably avoid. However, if your client asks what it means, most experts interpret eco-friendly to refer to products that have little impact on the native eco-system. One problem with using this term is that it can lead to more confusion. For instance, who determines what is or is not eco-friendly? Is eco-friendly the same as environmentally preferable? Does eco-friendly mean the same as Green?

**Environmentally preferable** is best described as products or services that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment when compared with competing products or services that serve the same purpose. This may involve raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, maintenance, or disposal of the product or service.

**Environmentally preferable purchasing (EPP)** is defined by the Federal government as placing a greater emphasis on multiple environmental considerations of a product when making purchasing decisions or when comparing Green and conventional products. This includes the product’s recycled content, energy and

water efficiency, renewable resource use, toxicity considerations, environmental impacts throughout the life cycle of the product, and disposal of the product. However, it also includes recognition that the product must perform as well as, if not better than, comparable products used for the same purpose and be cost effective.

**Green Certification** can best be described as a process that evaluates a product based on how it is manufactured, used, and its eventual disposal. Among other measures, an independent, third-party laboratory analyzes the product's ingredients, which is analyzed once again by a recognized certification organization, such as EcoLogo™ or Green Seal®. If the process and the examination prove the product meets specific criteria—indicating it has a significantly reduced impact on the environment when compared to conventional products—it may be honored with Green Certification.