

Decorating Trends

Flooring Is Not Just A Fashion Statement

(NAPSA)—Designer-inspired looks, rich embellishments and technological advances are changing the way people look at flooring.

Floors have become more than a surface to walk on. Today's residential flooring makes a statement not only of fashion, but also of homeowner philosophy that transcends taste and space.

For example, floors today feature recycled leathers and suedes, woods that are not merely "exotic" but also "green," self-cleaning ceramics, and carpets made from corn sugars.

Wood Flooring

For wood flooring, tropical looks that are also environmentally friendly are the rage as manufacturers show an understanding of newly established environmental standards. Hardwoods from sustainable forests undergo natural staining and aging treatments that leave them looking much like their highly sought but endangered rainforest cousins. Unfinished vintage looks and high-gloss, piano-finish contemporary wood planks are also growing in popularity. Coconut palm floors resembling zebrawood are a new trend—and they are eco-friendly, durable and affordable.

Carpets and Area Rugs

The ever-popular plush carpet appears in a wide variety of alternative and sustainable materials and styles, including a new, luxurious hemp weave that looks and feels like silk and a cozy "fisherman-style" wool weave rug that's like a sumptuous sweater for your floor.

Neutrals will also hold their place in plush flooring but the color du jour in carpet and rugs is turquoise, bringing a clean, fresh representation of water and sky into the home.

To add a bit of sparkle to your plush floors, a number of manu-



Photo courtesy of US Floors

Renewable bamboo floors such as Solid Strand Woven Bamboo in River Rock add great warmth to a home.

facturers have woven shiny tinsel into new carpets and rugs.

Laminates

Giving American homes an international look for less, laminated floors are made to look like exotic woods inspired by tropical varieties from Hawaii, Honduras and Africa. One new line of wood-look laminates offers a beautiful alternative to timbers that can no longer be harvested without harming the environment—and breaking the law. Homeowners can enjoy an exotic look underfoot without having to fear for the rainforests because of it.

Porcelain and Ceramic

Tiles are now available in every color, texture, shape and size imaginable. In fact, a rapidly developing trend in the category is to design your own. Many companies are now offering completely customizable tiles in a wide assortment of materials and a rainbow array of colors. Many will even create custom dyes for consumers who send in swatches of fabric or paint to be matched.

Then there's this feat for your feet: A new tile line infused with antimicrobial protection that

won't wash off or wear away provides a layer of defense from stain- and odor-causing bacteria.

Realistic Resilients

The resilient category—which includes vinyl, cork and linoleum, among other surfaces—offers new looks that closely resemble travertine, limestone, concrete and slate but leave out the high price and high maintenance. New lines of rich-looking leather and suede tiles are made from recycled car seats and jackets.

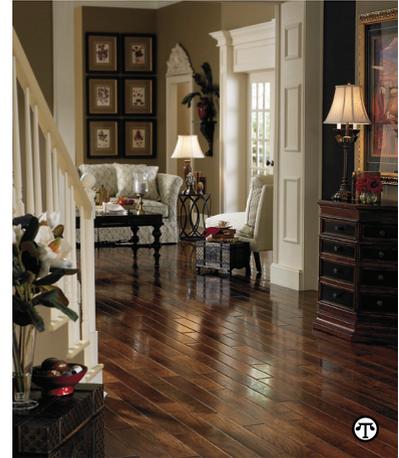


Photo courtesy of Anderson Hardwood Floors

Exotic hardwoods add mystery and drama to a living space. The Tropical Reflections line offers eco-friendly exotics using a PermaColor process.

Find Help

To help you find flooring to suit your sense of style, the World Floor Covering Association website, www.WFCA.org, has answers to floor-covering questions. It also offers a product catalog and practical tips on manufacturing details, varieties and styles available, things to consider before you buy and how to prepare for installation, plus a database of retailers to help you find a store nearby.