

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

It's Easy Being Green—If You're Considering Flooring

(NAPSA)—Don't let anyone tell you it's not easy being green. When it comes to floor covering, making a "green" choice is easier than ever.

Green refers to a substance or manufacturing method that uses renewable or sometimes raw and/or recycled material or energy sources. Nonrenewable materials are those that come from sources that once depleted are gone forever.

In addition to green flooring products, there is another category called "sustainable." Sustainable flooring products are those that minimize impact on the environment at each phase of their life cycle.

"Some of the most popular green products include cork, bamboo and linoleum," said Christopher Davis, president of the World Floor Covering Association. "Many new and existing flooring products qualify as sustainable, including recycled/reclaimed wood and carpet; natural carpets made from cotton, wools and grass; ceramic tiles; stone; chlorine-free, resilient, recycled rubber and VCT (Vinyl Composition Tiles) vinyl."

Here's some information on some of the sustainable floor surfaces available today;

Cork: To create cork floors, only the bark is extracted from the tree, meaning that the tree is left completely intact. In time, the tree will grow a new layer of bark that can be harvested again. Cork floors absorb sound, unlike harder surfaces, and come in a wide variety of colors and styles.

Bamboo: Unlike hardwood, bamboo does not come from trees. It's a fast-growing grass. It can



Photo courtesy of Forbo

How green is your flooring choice? Options such as linoleum (shown above), bamboo and ceramic floors are better for the planet than you might imagine.

grow from sprouts to harvesting in three to five years, so an acre of bamboo can provide more flooring than an acre of trees. When bamboo shoots are cut, the roots remain intact, and fresh, new sprouts grow in their place. The dense root mass of bamboo helps prevent soil erosion and provides a viable crop opportunity in hilly acres where other crops cannot grow.

Linoleum: Linoleum flooring is manufactured from renewable resources, such as linseed oil, resin, wood flour, flax, cork powder and pigments. Its durability makes it very suitable for high-traffic areas. Linoleum is also naturally biodegradable, and because it is naturally anti-bacterial, there are no chemical agents needed in its manufacture or maintenance. It's available in rug form, too.

The following products are examples of sustainable flooring:

Carpet: Sustainable carpets must use postconsumer and industrial materials, biodegradable dyes and solutions and recycled wastewater.

Hardwood: Sustainable hardwood floors are made from recycled wood and/or antique woods that offer a timeless weathered look.

Ceramic: Sustainable ceramic floors are primarily made from natural and renewable resources and are exceptionally durable.

Stone: Sustainable stone floors offer low-extraction impact on the planet and are exceptionally long lasting.

Resilient: Durable, long-lasting, sustainable resilient floors are available chlorine-free and are typically made from recycled vinyls and plastics.

Rubber: Sustainable rubber floors, a popular trend lately, can be made from recycled tires and other materials.

Vinyl: Sustainable VCT vinyl tile, made primarily of limestone, is long lasting and offers a high performance rating.

Green and sustainable products are produced around the world, including a number of developing nations. Purchasing these products is not just good for the planet but can help support the people in these countries.

"The flooring-covering market caught on to the green movement earlier than most," said Davis. "Manufacturers have spent huge portions of their budgets to bring more products to market that are easier on the environment."

For more information, visit www.wfca.org.