

~ Buyer's Guide to Green Flooring Materials ~

This buyer's guide will make comparing green flooring materials easier and more reliable. Use it to find the best green flooring material for your specific situation.

Material	Green Synopsis	Selection	Pros	Cons	Recommended Uses
Bamboo	Renewable resource. Fast growing grass which can be selectively harvested annually.	Look for bamboo products that have no formaldehyde added.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * renewable resource * extremely durable * harder than red oak or maple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * overuse of natural bamboo forests may be destroying them * Asian sources require significant embodied energy for transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * bedroom * living room * family room * dining room * kitchen * entry way
Carpet	Green carpets and area rugs are those made from natural fibers or having high recycled content of synthetic fibers.	Look for The Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label Plus certification. Area rugs and carpet tiles are preferable to broadloom (wall-to-wall) carpet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * carpet industry is proactively addressing its environmental issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * synthetic fibers are made from petroleum, a non-renewable resource * difficult to clean * can harbor dirt, dust, and mold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * formal areas * bedroom * stairs
Cork	Cork is a renewable resource made from the bark of the cork oak.	Look for products that have no formaldehyde added. Avoid cork-vinyl composites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * renewable resource * sometimes has recycled content * easy to clean if properly sealed * good foot support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * indoor air quality impacts from sealers used to create a durable surface * European sources result in higher embodied energy for transport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * kitchen * family room

Linoleum	Same ingredients today as when it was invented in 1863 -- linseed oil, cork dust, wood flour, tree resins, ground limestone, and pigments all pressed onto a jute backing.	Look for "natural linoleum." Vinyl flooring may be generically called "linoleum."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * renewable ingredients * often has recycled content * 30-40 year lifespan * easy to clean * good foot support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * manufactured in Europe, resulting in significant embodied energy for transport * odor from linseed oil may irritate some persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * kitchen * bathroom * family room
Rubber	Virgin rubber is derived from rubber trees, a renewable resource; recycled rubber reduces environmental burden of discarded tires.	Almost all rubber, except virgin rubber, has a significant odor. Use indoors only if well ventilated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * often has recycled content * easy to clean * good foot support * can be installed without adhesives * durable (20 year lifespan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * continual off-gassing has indoor air quality impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * outdoors * well ventilated indoor space
Stone	Natural resource; durable material.	Look for locally mined and fabricated stone. Look for stone that does not necessarily need to be sealed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * easy to clean * durable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * stone is a finite resource * high embodied energy if stone is mined or fabricated overseas * sealers have potentially harmful VOC emissions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * kitchen * bathroom * entryway * fireplace

Tile	Durable material, often with recycled content.	Look for locally manufactured tiles with high recycled content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * easy to clean * durable * often has recycled content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * high embodied energy (to fire tiles and produce cementitious materials) * prioritize local sources because of heaviness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * kitchen * bathroom * entryway * fireplace
Wood	Natural material; durable.	Look Forest Stewardship Council-certified, salvaged, or reclaimed wood. Ask for a Chain-of-Custody certification. If product is laminated, avoid product with added formaldehyde. Look for sealers and cleaners that are environmentally benign and low VOC emitting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * renewable resource if from a sustainably managed forest * low embodied energy, particularly if harvested and produced locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * conventional forestry causes overharvesting and destruction of habitat * naturally occurring formaldehyde 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * bedroom * living room * family room * dining room * stairs