



“Greening” Is Sprouting Up All Over.

Has this ever crossed your mind as you make your product selections for your home? You want a healthier life and you’re concerned about how your choices will affect not only your home but the world environment as well. If so, that means you intuitively embrace the concept of “building green.” It’s not a color, it’s the movement toward natural choices in building and decorating products.

David Adamson founder of EcoBuild is a manufacturer’s representative and a materials consultant specializing in “environmentally less-impactful building materials.” He’s got a background in ecology and nature conservancy, he’s run non-profit organizations, and he was the founder of two retail stores in the Boulder, Colorado area, one in interior design, one a home center. Both carried eco-friendly flooring products.

Building and flooring materials are big users of natural resources, he states, and choices made by consumers can not only reduce the impact on our environment (consumption of resources and contributions to landfills) but also make buildings and the people in them more healthy, longer lasting and more productive.



Photos courtesy of Underfoot Floors.
From left to right: Natural Cork, Eco Timber Bamboo, and Marmoleum.

It's a natural, Adamson says. People, as part of nature, are automatically drawn to healthy, natural things like wood, cork, bamboo and natural fibers. "I am seeing a really nice overlap between the growth of sustainable-harvest hardwoods, cork, bamboo and natural linoleum at a time women want to feel good about their homes in terms of health." (See also coverage in this issue of other natural products like grasses, ceramic and porcelain tiles and stone.)

He cites growing popularity of flooring materials with low or no formaldehyde or other gas emissions and no pre-finishing and hypoallergenic products that can't harbor bacterial growth. "These are healthy, natural, easy-to-clean products which are long lasting and beautiful," Adamson said.

He explained how hard surfaces such as wood, linoleum, cork can create a higher value building. "They may cost more initially, but they last a long, long time." Adamson says it is also interesting to note, at least from his experience, how less expensive products with short lifecycles have a large environmental impact and how higher-value, often natural products have a smaller impact. "I've definitely seen an increase in interest in wood, cork, natural linoleum and natural-fiber floor covering because of that," he said.

Some people think green may be more expensive or "just not for me," but what we are seeing more and more, he claims, is the demand for flooring made from natural materials with less processing. Another green trend he's seeing is toward nicer but smaller homes with higher quality finishing touches. "That's exciting because it puts a lot less pressure on the environment. The healthier building and long-lasting nature translates into investment value and personal satisfaction," he added. Making a selection of floors that are natural and less toxic makes people feel good both physically and psychologically, he said. "We tend to overemphasize price, but green is an option retailers can offer that has both value and naturally enhances a home."

"I think green will be an issue for the rest of our lives. It's exciting to see how many consumers are managing to understand they have environmental choices. The less impact on the environment, the better it is, on the global level and on your floor. And you can still look good!"

Cork is a great example, says Adamson. After you're done using it, cork can be composted and add back to the soil.

For more on the subject, Adamson's recommended reading list includes logging on to www.BuildingGreen.com, or reading *Natural Home And Garden* magazine or the book "Green Remodeling - Changing The World One Room At A Time" by David Johnston. Investigate also the U.S Green Building Council, a building industry coalition which promotes, partially through its LEED initiative (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), environmentally responsible places to live and work at www.usgbc.org.  