



April 19/26, 2010

Cork and bamboo: Sustainable selling points

Cork and bamboo are both growing in market share from niche products to in-demand offerings as the sustainability movement gains momentum. Modern looks and the increased education of sales professionals are also aiding in the expansion of the categories. *FCW* uncovered some of the top selling points for retailers when it comes to cork and bamboo flooring goods.

Cork

The bark of the cork oak tree is what cork flooring is made from. The cork tree is harvested by peeling the bark away from the tree, and the process of harvesting actually helps the tree to flourish.

Cork is mostly grown in Portugal, although some is grown in Italy and China. The Portuguese law to protect the cork oak dates as far back as 1209. To this day, felling a cork oak, unless it is too old for productive purposes, is illegal and punishable by fines.

Cork oak forests and the resulting products minimize the world's ecological footprint by increasing CO2 retention, preserving biodiversity and combating desertification.

The initial harvest is at 25 years of maturity and the cork oak can be re-harvested every nine to 11 years. Cork oaks can still produce cork after more than 200 years of age.

Using cork products can assist architects, designers and retailers in receiving points in the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green rating system for low-emitting materials, rapidly renewable resources and other credits.

Cork manufacturers are beefing up their cork offerings. For example, APC Cork launched The Plank, a series of long-length planks in natural and brown; Wicanders showed off its new Vinylcomfort at Surfaces 2010, a floating floor that combines a top layer of vinyl and two layers of cork, allowing thermal insulation, walking comfort and sound reduction; USFloors recently added Almada, which uses colors and patterns to create a customized look; Capri Cork expanded its offerings from the Mediterra Rigato Collection to include Grid, a product that uses light and dark shades of cork; and WE Cork is also creating new looks with its Timeless Collection, offering a variety of colors and patterns.

Bamboo

Bamboo is a grass, not a tree, and is a rapidly renewable resource, meaning that it grows faster than it is being depleted.

Moso bamboo, the common form of bamboo used for flooring, is harvested between five and a half to six years and leaves behind a thriving plant and new shoots.

Bamboo flooring can aid in receiving credits in the LEED rating system under rapidly renewable resources, and other credits.

Makers of bamboo products are continually striving to better the green story of their goods. EcoTimber's Strand Woven Poplar wood is made with no added urea formaldehyde and is recycled from furniture factories; Teragren is combining style and sustainability with the launch of its Portfolio Collection; and Wellmade just expanded distribution via a partnership with J.J. Haines.