

GreenStrides

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The Pros and Cons of Bamboo Flooring

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Bamboo is a fast-growing grass which is typically ready to harvest every 5 or 6 years, when it reaches optimal hardness, as opposed to hardwoods which take 60+ years to mature. It regenerates itself and new shoots will start to grow once the harvested bamboo is removed. Different manufacturers utilize varying methods to process the bamboo into flooring products. It is important to inquire about how environmentally-sound these practices are when making your purchase.



PROS:

- Rapidly renewable, natural resource.
- Typically grown without the use of pesticides or other harmful chemicals.
- Can be harder than most hardwoods, depending on the species and its age when harvested.
- Beautiful, durable and long-lasting.
- Available in **several styles** (floating, nail-down or glue-down), **grain patterns** (vertical, or horizontal — where the nodes are more visible) and **colors** (natural, stained, or carbonized/caramelized — where the bamboo is steamed and the sugars within caramelize to deepen its color. No added stain is needed).

CONS:

- It is harvested in Asia and therefore, like most products, needs to be shipped to the U.S., although shipping via cargo ship has less of an environmental impact than other transportation methods.
- Inferior bamboo floors can warp, cup, de-laminate, dent, etc., if immature bamboo is used, or if cheap/bad glues, poor milling, inferior finishes, or poor presses are used. It is also important for the bamboo to be grown in the right soil, climate and altitude.

What to look for:

- *Moso* bamboo that is grown in ideal conditions and has not been harvested earlier than 5 years.
- Kiln-dried bamboo to ensure low moisture content.
- No added formaldehyde (NAF, or NAUF-no added urea formaldehyde) in adhesives used to make or install the flooring, or flooring that emits a very low level of **VOCs**.
- Non-toxic, water-based and solvent-free finishes.

Where to Buy it (the following manufacturers are based in the U.S.):

- **Teragren** pays its bamboo farmers a fair wage and utilizes environmentally-preferable shipping methods (both internationally and domestically). After its bamboo stalks are split during harvesting, they are boiled in a solution of water, hydrogen peroxide and natural borate to eliminate pests and mildew. Teragren's bamboo flooring is the only one that qualifies for *FloorScore* certification from *Scientific Certification Systems (SCS)* for creating a product that does not compromise indoor air quality. A lifetime structural warranty also comes with it. (Signature Naturals vertical grain Caramelized flooring pictured above)
- **Plyboo by Smith and Fong** offers urea formaldehyde-free bamboo flooring which is also the only **FSC-certified** bamboo flooring on the market. Pesticides, fertilizers and irrigation are not used in its bamboo forests to further lessen environmental impacts.
- **Bamboo Hardwoods** offers bamboo flooring with many environmental attributes as well.