



STARLOG

A SERIES OF FLOORCOVERING BULLETINS

VOLUME IV / ISSUE 3

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HARDWOOD

Hardwood is a perfect fit for a natural look combined with high-tech.



CORK

Cork provides excellent acoustics to interiors.



BAMBOO

Bamboo is contemporary and upscale.



LAMINATE

Laminate's durability stands up to education applications.



Commercial Wood And Laminate Floors Growing in Popularity

Wood has been a favored interior finish for generations. In commercial environments, this has been a love/hate relationship. Love the look—hate the maintenance and moisture issues. Those concerns can be put to rest, thanks to innovations in hardwood construction plus the introduction of laminate flooring.. These products feature great aesthetics with superior physical performance and easy maintenance.

Although oak is the tried and true hardwood flooring choice, other species and color options including exotics are entering the market and becoming more popular. Bamboo is earning a reputation as an environmentally friendly material with a fresh, clean look. Cork, the original resilient and acoustic floor, is now available in lighter shades and contemporary colors. Laminates are the newest category of flooring to enter the commercial hard surface segment. Laminates feature realistic wood designs protected by a chip-and indentation-resistant surface over a layered structure. Designers now have more choices than ever before for selecting genuine hardwood or laminate with wood visuals that are styled and manufactured specifically for commercial interiors.





Hardwood

Wood planks manufactured with acrylic-impregnation were developed specifically to stand up to the rigors of commercial environments. The impregnation adds durability, toughness and traffic resistance, is the key difference between residential and commercial hardwood.

Randy Gablehouse, general sales manager, commercial floor products, Armstrong World Industries, says, "The premium wear layer is made from mineral crystals suspended in a ultraviolet-cured urethane. This provides twice as much resistance to indentation than non-impregnated wood products." The acrylic impregnation also resists abrasion and stains, and reduces maintenance and refinishing costs.

Gablehouse says the advantages of factory finished flooring versus on-site finishing are the elimination of variables, time and costs associated with on-site prep. The factory finish provides years of service if maintained properly, and down the road, can be reapplied to protect the wood underneath. Routine maintenance includes sweeping and damp mopping with a neutral cleaner.

Commercial hardwood is available in both solid and in engineered constructions. Solid oak planks are the time-honored choice. But, use is limited to on and above grade levels due to moisture concerns. Today's options include engineered flooring, which can be used on, above and below grade level. They're made via multiple layer, cross grain construction that provides exceptional dimensional stability over most subfloors, including concrete. Installation methods for planks and parquet tiles include traditional nail down and gluing to the subfloor.

Traditional oak patterns have branched into different visuals, including distressed rustics in natural and fashion colors. Other species include maple, hickory, basswood, pecan, cherry, ash and walnut. Just as there are more trees in the forest than one can count, these newer species are available in colors that run the gamut from light to dark and from neutral to trendy. Gablehouse says, "The latest in designer woods include exotic, non-endangered species from South America, Africa and the Far East."

A qualified, professional contractor, such as your StarNet member, should manage the installation to protect your hardwood investment. They will ensure that the manufacturer's recommended materials and methods are used for a quality installation and for full warranty coverage. Planks and parquet tiles can be glued or nailed to the subfloor.



Hardwood's rich look and feel complements high-end retail interiors.



Bamboo

An increasingly popular choice for commercial applications is bamboo. It is harder than oak or maple and is more dimensionally stable than many hardwoods. In fact, bamboo is 2 times more stable than maple.

Bamboo is available in prefinished and unfinished surfaces. Ann Knight, vice president of TimberGrass explains that their bamboo product has a "five-coat, high millage finish that suspends aluminum oxide in the second coat to provide more effective screening and coating." The advantages of prefinishing include consistency and control of the aesthetic, higher hardness from the aluminum oxide and the elimination of many on-site costs. Both prefinished and site finished floors can be resurfaced over time.

Like other hardwood, bamboo options include solid strips and engineered floor that feature a bamboo wear layer over a core and backing material. The engineered products withstand moisture and can be installed below grade. Sweeping or vacuuming plus damp (not wet) mopping with an approved floor cleaner maintain bamboo floors beautifully.



Beautiful, durable bamboo flooring is an environmentally responsible choice for commercial interiors.

One of bamboo's key appeals is its high environmental friendliness and sustainability. Quick-growing bamboo trees are harvested at six years, leaving new shoots to reproduce. Knight says their product is "made from renewable resources environmentally friendly materials and methods in the manufacturing process, including water-based, solvent free coatings." Bamboo offers design flexibility with a selection of colors, edge finishing and variable lengths. Square edges and micro-beveled edges are available, and a variety of installed looks can be achieved by using precisely milled lengths or random lengths.

Bamboo installation uses the same techniques as any hardwood, including glue-down and nail-down methods. Bamboo is slightly harder and denser than other woods, so a carbide blade is necessary to cut the planks. Your StarNet member is equipped to install bamboo floors including the newly introduced floating floor from TimberGrass including the glue and glueless profiles. The term "floating" applies to floor coverings in which the pieces are adhered to each other instead of being anchored to the substrate. The resulting floor literally floats above the subfloor, eliminating installation issues including telegraphing and moisture emission.



Cork

Cork flooring gets "rediscovered" every few years as designers and facility managers search for options in natural materials. Cork tiles are made from wood bark harvested from special oak trees. The granulated bark is combined with resin binders into blocks, which are baked and sliced into tiles. Scott Qualls, vice president, sales and marketing of Dodge Regupol/Eco Surfaces says their company markets cork tile because of the many features and benefits of the traditional structure. "It's the original resilient floor, comfortable underfoot, acoustic, warm, and naturally slip-retardant," Qualls says. Cork is also available as a plank product, featuring a cork veneer over engineered layers of wood or particleboard.

Waxed and unwaxed tiles are available. The unwaxed product is finished on the jobsite, including sanding to prep the surface and coating with polyurethane for protection. Qualls says his company recommends three coats for commercial jobs. He adds, "The advantages of on-site finishing include custom control of the amount of stain and protective coating used, and the ability to apply the finish and coating in joints." Maintenance mimics that of other wood flooring coated with urethane, consisting of vacuuming and damp mopping with a mild detergent and water.

Cork is the original environmentally friendly floor, as the tree is not harmed to obtain the bark. The outer bark is peeled from the tree, leaving inner bark intact to form the base layer for the next growth cycle. The trees live for approximately 150 years before their bark-producing lifespan comes to an end.

Cork tile has an indigenous brown hue derived from the bark itself. Plus, the longer it bakes—like a cookie—the darker the color. New stains and coatings are adding a wider spectrum of colors to cork flooring, including lighter, brighter shades and trendier colors for retail interiors. The granules in the tile determine the visual, which can range from highly burlled graining to non-directional looks. Cork tile is installed by the glue-down method. The floorcovering should be installed on or above grade level due to moisture issues.



Cork's traditional warm honey tones and newer, lighter custom tints create design flexibility.



Laminate

The appealing look of wood without nature's foibles is driving the growth of laminate flooring. Specifiers and facility managers look to laminates for realistic wood visuals with the added benefits of superior durability and easy maintenance. Laminate floors have a tough surface that is durable, resists denting and scratching, and stands up to commercial traffic. The permanent surface protection never needs refinishing or waxing.

There are differences between residential and commercial laminates—essentially performance and cost. Randy Phillips, sales manager, Wilsonart Commercial Flooring says, "High pressure laminate (HPL) is preferred for commercial interiors, versus direct pressure laminate (DPL), because HPL offers superior impact and chip resistance." HPL consists of a piece of high pressure laminate made from layers of kraft paper saturated in phenolic resin that is covered with a pattern paper for aesthetics. A melamine coating impregnated with aluminum oxide particles for protection is applied to the surface. The melamine overlay provides the superior wear, stain and fade protection. Their dedicated commercial product is warranted for ten years against wear, stain and fade.

A different type of laminate construction is available from Mannington. They describe their product as an "advanced composite floor" to distinguish the difference. It is made with an extruded synthetic core that is highly dimensionally stable and extremely resistant to moisture. So resistant, that, "We have placed iCore in boiling water for 8 hours with no harm to the product," says Andrew Walker, national business development manager, iCore. It can be installed over concrete that has a high moisture emission rate, and does not need to acclimate to humidity or temperature levels on the jobsite. The core is covered with a photographic print image and protected by a wear layer made of melamine and aluminum oxide.

Laminates have unlimited options in printed visuals. Traditional oak, maple and birch patterns sell well, but unique and contemporary looks are gaining popularity. These include exotic woods, abstracts, textures and monolithic visuals. Maintaining the protective surface includes dust mopping and occasional light damp mopping. "Routine maintenance will keep laminate floors as good looking ten or more years after installation as the day they were installed," according to Phillips. Walker adds, "Because laminates have no dye lots, damaged pieces can be easily replaced without replacing or refinishing the entire floor."

Laminates install via glue and glueless methods. Both methods produce floating structures that are recommended for installation on any grade level, even high-moisture concrete. Your StarNet member can recommend the right product and installation method to meet your needs.



Laminate features the benefits of wood design plus superior durability and easy maintenance.



Changes for the Better — Across the Board!

Specifiers and facility managers can specify wood and wood look flooring with confidence. These next-generation natural and manufactured products fuse beauty with technology for floors that satisfy all criteria— aesthetics, performance, easy installation and easy maintenance. When used in full field installations, wood and laminate floors bring warmth and elegance to commercial interiors. When used in combination with other hard and soft



Combining wood or laminate with other floor finishes creates separation in interiors that offer an appealing mix of textures, colors and patterns.

A wood or laminate floor is an investment in your interior and one that is cost-effective over the long-term lifespan of the flooring.

surfaces, they bridge virtually all textures and colors to create upscale custom designs.

A wood or laminate floor is an investment in the beauty of your interior, and one that is cost-effective over the long-term lifespan of the flooring. The cost for installing hardwood, cork, bamboo or laminate flooring ranges from \$6 to \$12 per square foot, depending upon job size, layout, product selection, on-site cutting and finishing, and local labor rates.

For more information about StarNet, visit us online at www.starnetflooring.com or call 1-800-787-6381.

One in a series of Bulletins from your Commercial Floorcovering Professionals at:



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