

Buyer's Guide to Green Flooring Materials

Material	Look for the Following Attributes	Pros	Cons	Cost	Suggested Uses
<p>Bamboo</p> <p>Renewable resource. Fast-growing grass that can be selectively harvested annually.</p>	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 	\$4 - \$8 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bedroom * Living room * Family room * Dining room * Kitchen * Entry way
<p>Carpet</p> <p>Green carpets and area rugs are those made from natural fibers or with a high content of recycled synthetic fibers.</p>	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 actively addressing its environmental issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Synthetic fibers are made from petroleum, a nonrenewable resource * Difficult to clean * Can harbor dirt, dust and mold 	\$4 and up per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Formal areas * Bedroom * Stairs
<p>Cork</p> <p>Cork is a renewable resource made from the bark of the cork oak.</p>	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 	\$3 - \$6 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Kitchen * Family room
<p>Linoleum</p> <p>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.</p>	"Natural linoleum." Vinyl flooring is sometimes generically called "linoleum."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Renewable ingredients * Often has recycled content * 30- to 40-year lifespan * Easy to clean * Good foot support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Made in Europe, resulting in significant embodied energy for transport * Odor from linseed oil may irritate some people 	\$4 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Kitchen * Bathroom * Family room
<p>Rubber</p> <p>Virgin rubber is derived from rubber trees, a renewable resource; recycled rubber reduces the environmental burden of discarded tires.</p>	Almost all rubber, except virgin rubber, has a significant odor. Use indoors only in well-ventilated areas.	<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 	\$5 - \$7 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Outdoors * Well-ventilated indoor space

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Stone Natural resource; durable material.	Locally mined and fabricated stone. Look for stone that does not have 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 produce potentially harmful VOC emissions 	\$3 - \$10 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Kitchen * Bathroom * Entryway * Fireplace
Tile Durable material, often with recycled content.	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 	\$1 - \$6 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Kitchen * Bathroom * Entryway * Fireplace
Wood Natural material; durable.	Forest Stewardship Council-certified, salvaged or reclaimed wood. Ask for a chain-of-custody certification. Avoid laminated products 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 over harvesting and destruction of habitat * Naturally occurring formaldehyde 	\$3 - \$6 per square foot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bedroom * Living room * Family room * Dining room * Stairs