

New options in sustainable flooring

By Liz O'Donnell

Bamboo, cork and linoleum have risen in popularity as the industry has embraced sustainability. But when it comes to green flooring, they are not the only options. Glass, leather and even concrete are stepping up to fill the need for green in both the residential and commercial markets.

Denny Kurtz at MCI Carpet One in Minnesota is seeing a huge push for green flooring. Bamboo and cork are still the staples for this dealer, but he has added glass too.

"We have a nice display of glass tiles that have been getting a lot of attention," Kurtz said. "But the decisions ultimately come down to price, and the glass is much more expensive than porcelain."

Despite the higher price tags, green products are very much in demand and new alternatives are adding variety to the mix.

EcoDomo

EcoDomo Recycled Leather Tiles are made from leather, natural rubber and Acacia tree bark. All of these natural products are completely renewable within a five-year cycle. Acacia tree bark is similar to cork in that it is harvested from trees which re-grow the bark over time. The tiles contain 65 percent pre-consumer content and can be glued down using a low volatile organic compound (VOC) water-based adhesive.

EcoDomo's tiles are less expensive than 100 percent leather tiles but they have a very similar look, texture and smell, the company said. The tiles are cut from 54-inch-wide rolls up to 100 feet long so customers can order different sizes to create unique patterns.

EnviroGLAS

Texas-based EnviroGLAS mixes glass chips from used bottles, mirrors and plate windows to make a flooring surface as hard as marble terrazzo. The result is Enviro-PLANK, 6 x 36 tiles made from 75 percent pre- and post-consumer recycled glass. The glass chips are mixed with resin to make fully customizable patterns and colors. The prod-

uct offers an array of design options and a small ecological footprint.

Beyond the recycled content, EnviroGLAS has several other green benefits. By reusing glass, the company reduces the amount of glass sent to landfills. Plus, EnviroPLANK has zero VOCs so it has no negative impact on indoor air quality. Finally, the tiles can be cleaned by dry mop and don't require chemicals for maintenance.

Oceanside Glasstile

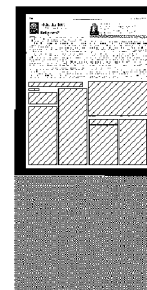
Oceanside Glasstiles are made from a mix of recycled bottle glass and silica sand, a quartz byproduct and a natural resource. The post-consumer recycled content is taken from curbside recycling programs. The 4 x 4 tiles are resistant to extreme temperatures and can withstand 900 pounds per square inch of force. Their durability and long lifespan are other sustainable benefits, the company said.

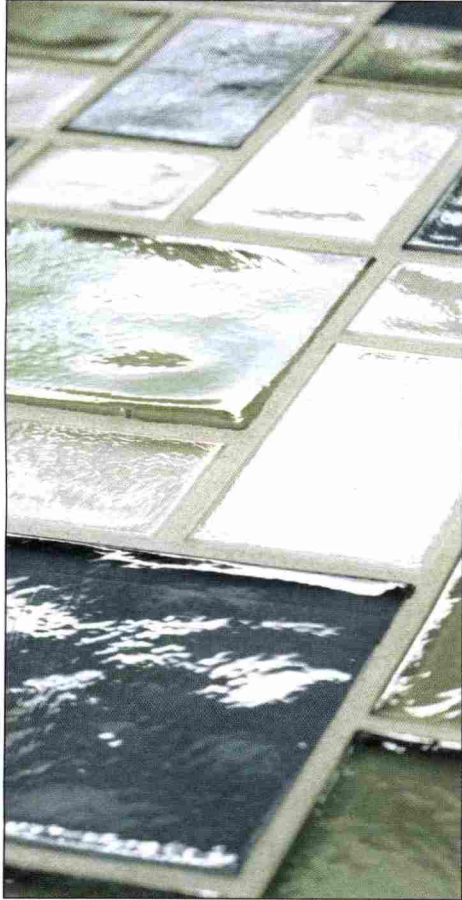
Concrete

Stained concrete floors are also gaining in popularity as end users search for green building alternatives. An exposed concrete floor can be an energy-efficient alternative to other surfaces such as sheet vinyl and carpet. Concrete is slow to heat up and cool off, which can help moderate indoor climate. Plus it is low maintenance and requires only a wet-mop for cleaning.

This trend can also present opportunities for the floor covering retailer. Barbara Peyton of Peyton and Associates, a Texas-based company that specializes in stained concrete floors, says flooring dealers should be willing to partner with concrete companies for sealers, waxes and stains.

Concrete can be treated with stains or colorants to create a variety of looks and textures. Many of these products are available with low or no VOCs to prevent off-gassing. **FCW**

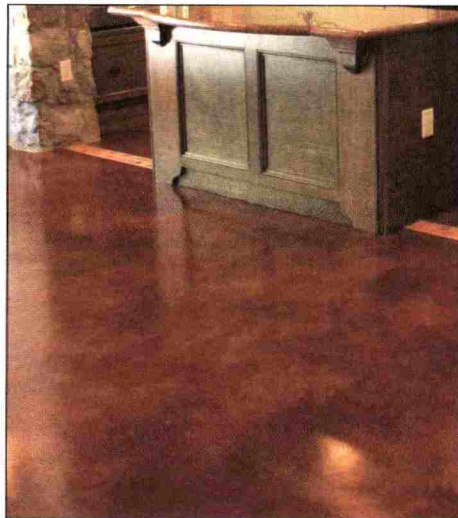




Oceanside Glasstile



EnviroPLANK



Stained concrete