

# Floor coverings



Whatever the material, floors have a huge impact on indoor air quality, the look and feel of a home, as well as its environmental performance.

There is a wide variety of flooring materials available that vary in their health and environmental impacts on your home. When choosing flooring there are a number of areas you need to consider:

**Embodied energy:** the amount of energy consumed by all processes associated with the production of a material. Embodied energy is measured from the mining, harvesting or manufacturing of a material

through to its transportation. While estimates on embodied energy vary, generally the more highly processed a material is, the higher its embodied energy. For example, timber is lower than plastic.

## Life-cycle assessment

Life-cycle assessment measures the total environmental impact of a material. This means following it through every step of its life; from obtaining raw materials all the way through the manufacture, transportation, installation in a home, and finally disposal or recycling.

## Reduce, reuse, recycle

Construction waste contributes up to 40% of rubbish that goes to landfill each year in Australia. There are a number of things you can do to prevent waste: use only as much material as you need, reuse existing buildings and materials where possible, and choose materials that can be recycled at the end of their useful life.

## Indoor air quality

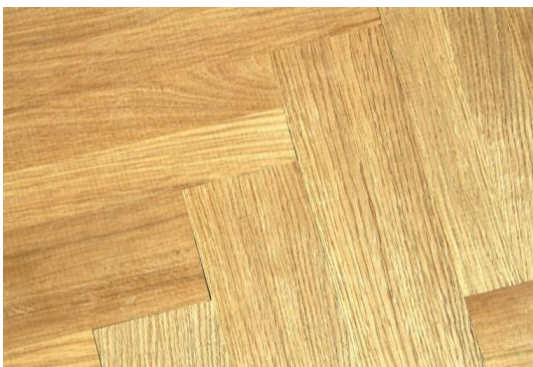
The air within a home can be more polluted than the outdoor air. Unhealthy indoor air can cause health problems such as headache, fatigue, coughing, sneezing and eye, nose, throat and skin irritation. Indoor air pollution can be caused by synthetic building materials, finishes and furnishings, the use of household cleaners and the presence of insects, pests, moulds and other fungi.

## Passive solar design

You need to consider your climate when selecting floor material. Choosing a suitable material for your climate will increase the comfort of your home, lower your building costs and reduce the overall environmental impact.



# Timber



Timber floors look beautiful and put the natural world right at your feet. Timber is low in embodied energy and can be reused, recycled or composted if no further use is found for it.

Timber is also generally non-toxic, as long as it is sealed with an environmentally friendly natural finish to help bring out the shine. Choose sustainably-sourced and recycled timbers for minimal environmental impact. Check with your builder or local council building advisor to see what bushfire regulations apply to your home and the use of timber as a flooring option.



## **SUPPLIERS**

Just Old Flooring - <http://www.justoldflooring.com.au/> - Ph. (03) 9460 1477

Shiver Me Timbers - <http://www.shivermetimbers.com.au/> - Ph. (03) 9317 7122

## **Bamboo**



A material that is growing in popularity, bamboo is strong, durable and lightweight.

Like timber (bamboo is a grass), bamboo is a renewable resource, and uses fewer valuable resources such as water because it takes only three to six years to grow.

## **SUPPLIERS**

Bamboo & Timber Select - [www.bambooandtimber.com.au](http://www.bambooandtimber.com.au) - Ph. (03) 9543 8843

Bamboo Floors - [www.bamboofloors.com.au](http://www.bamboofloors.com.au) - Ph. (02) 9918 4668

Eco Flooring - [www.ecoflooring.com.au](http://www.ecoflooring.com.au) - Ph. (02) 9410 0640

Smartdeck - [www.smartdeck.com.au](http://www.smartdeck.com.au)

Style Limited - [www.stylebambooflooring.com](http://www.stylebambooflooring.com) - Ph. (03) 9671 4888

Style plantation - [www.styleplantation.com](http://www.styleplantation.com)

## **Concrete & Tiles**



While higher in embodied energy, concrete is a fantastic material for storing and releasing heat (thermal mass); a must for good passive solar design, particularly in colder climates. Polished concrete floors look stunning and there is a range of finishes and colourings to suit any style or taste.

Tiles come in a range of types including ceramic, slate, terracotta, brick and pavers. Tiles, like concrete, are good thermal mass; darker colours with a matt surface work better than light shiny finishes. Ask your supplier how and where the tiles are sourced to ascertain their environmental impact.

## **SUPPLIERS**

AAA Sexy Floors - [www.aaasexyfloors.com.au](http://www.aaasexyfloors.com.au) - Ph: 1300 789 821

Boral - [www.boral.com.au/productcatalogue/product.aspx?product=2031](http://www.boral.com.au/productcatalogue/product.aspx?product=2031)

*Listed suppliers are a guide and are not endorsed by Green Cross Australia or the Alternative Technology Association.*



Independent Cement - [www.independentcement.com.au](http://www.independentcement.com.au) - Ph. (03) 9676 0000

Sadler Stone - [www.sadlerstone.com](http://www.sadlerstone.com) Ph. 1800 262 011

Zeostone - [www.zeostone.com.au](http://www.zeostone.com.au) - Ph: (03) 9555 6066



## Carpet, vinyl and linoleum



Some floor coverings greatly influence the indoor air quality as they contain synthetic chemical products.

Choose natural materials such as lino (not to be confused with vinyl floor coverings), wool, hemp, sisal, jute, cork and seagrass matting.

There are some natural lino materials including Marmoleum which has Good Environmental Choice Australia accreditation. Carpets can also be a breeding ground for dust mites and other pollutants, so choose one with a low pile and have it cleaned regularly.

### **SUPPLIERS**

Natural Floor Coverings - [www.naturalfloorcoverings.com.au](http://www.naturalfloorcoverings.com.au)

Forbo Flooring systems - [www.forbo-flooring.com.au](http://www.forbo-flooring.com.au)

Comcork Flooring - [www.logicaustralia.com.au](http://www.logicaustralia.com.au) - Ph. (03) 9544 2288

Ecospective - [www.ecospective.com.au/](http://www.ecospective.com.au/) - Ph. (02) 8078 6965

### **More info**

Ecospecifier - [www.ecospecifier.org](http://www.ecospecifier.org)

Forest Stewardship Council - [www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)

Good Environmental Choice Australia - [www.geca.org.au/](http://www.geca.org.au/)

Good Wood Guide - [www.greenpeace.org.au/goodwoodguide](http://www.greenpeace.org.au/goodwoodguide)

Your Home - [www.yourhome.gov.au](http://www.yourhome.gov.au)

