

guest column

5 reasons to choose vinyl tiles for garage floors

When it comes to installing flooring in a garage, most people think the process ends once the concrete is poured onto the foundations. The majority of homeowners tend to stick with concrete as the top choice for their garage floors as it means no additional expense. As a flooring option, concrete is extremely strong and hard wearing. It can, however, chip away over time and attracts dust and dirt with relative ease. Concrete floors can also stain quite easily with oils that are particularly hard to remove.

One alternative to concrete flooring that is becoming increasingly popular in garages throughout the country is vinyl floor tiles. This type of flooring can be fitted to an existing concrete garage floor and can often add some color and style to the space. While aesthetics are not



always a priority for a garage, having a floor that looks good is never a bad thing.

So, why should consumers consider vinyl tiles for their garage floors? Here are some top reasons:

1. Durability

One major reason to consider using vinyl floor tiles in a garage is their strength and durability. Like concrete, vinyl tiles are an extremely hardwearing product that can cope with almost anything that is thrown at it. Unlike concrete, vinyl is a softer product, which will be much kinder to objects that are dropped on it.

2. Ease of maintenance

The garage is a place that can often be hard to keep clean. It is an area that we use to store our car or other equipment and is also regularly used for a wide range of DIY jobs. Garage use often results in the area becoming dirty, with the floor getting the brunt of it. Vinyl tiles are

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easy to wipe clean and are resistant to most chemicals. The upper wear layer of vinyl tiles prevents dirt buildup, reducing the amount of dust and grime that can start to cover a garage floor.

3. No-fuss installation

Vinyl floor tiles are easy to fit; tiles can be slotted into place with relative ease. Manufacturers such as Flexi-Tile produce interlocking floor tiles, which join together like a jigsaw puzzle and only need to be hammered into place with a mallet. They can also be fitted to an existing garage floor and take very little time to install. The new floor will be ready to use in no time.

4. Slip resistance

Garages can often propose the risk of hazards, particularly from slipping on chemicals, liquids or water. A concrete garage floor can become increasingly dangerous in colder weather when there is a chance of frost and wet leaves working their way onto the floor. Vinyl tiles can help reduce weather-related hazards as they come with a studied or textured finish which provides extra grip underfoot, reducing the risk of falls.

5. Durability

The final reason to consider vinyl floor tiles is their resistance to punctures and abrasions. Concrete flooring can chip over time but PVC tiles are hardwearing, staying strong in the face of breaks and holes. Most people tend to use garages as storage areas, storing anything from household furniture and appliances to sporting goods and bikes. These types of equipment are heavy and can damage garage floors if handled the wrong way. Vinyl tiles provide a little more flexibility in how stored items are maneuvered and organized.

It's time for consumers to start thinking of their garages as extensions of their homes. Like in other rooms, the floor in a garage can often make a statement. Help your customers consider the options available and the long-term benefits vinyl floor tiles can bring to their garages.

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Cork: A smart, sustainable

MANUFACTURERS HIGHLIGHT INHERENT BENEFITS, NEW DESIGNS

By Jenna Lippin

While top players across all categories, from wood to carpet to LVT, work to create a more sustainable flooring option, the major manufacturers in the world of cork flooring can sit back and relax as their products are inherently environmentally friendly and made of rapidly renewable material.

When some of the principal cork manufacturers were asked why their flooring is the most sustainable, all executives cited the harvesting process. The trees from which bark is collected to create cork flooring are not cut down, as they are with hardwood floors. Cork bark is harvested about every nine years, sometimes less, and it regenerates over its lifespan for continued harvests. As explained by Ann Wicander, president of WE Cork, reproduction under 10 years is considered rapidly renewable.

"From a product standpoint, cork's sustainability is primarily attributed to the harvest cycle; the material is renewable," said Gary Keeble, product and marketing manager at USFloors. "Cork oaks can live for hundreds of years. [Cork] replenishes itself and is a self-sustaining material."

Furthering its environmental efforts, some cork manufacturers reuse the waste from the manufacturing process to create other cork goods. USFloors uses discarded cork from the production of cork stoppers, made by its parent company, Amorim, "to build what is called the agglomerated cork layer," Keeble noted. "If you think of a corkboard, that's agglomerated cork granules. The decorative cork layer is on top of that, so the agglomeration is where the cushion-like part is. You also see [the waste used in] underlayers. Even the dust that is created is used."

While cork has numerous attributes to tout, the roadblock that most manufacturers have faced is reaching consumers. Because most retail salespeople are uneducated when it comes to cork, they choose to skip it

during the sales process. Without proper knowledge, the product cannot be sold.

Upon noticing the lack of information among retailers and their associates, cork producers have launched initiatives to help educate the individuals

design. As more aesthetically pleasing visuals become available with cork, an increasing amount of customers will ask about it in-store.

Keeble agreed that the introduction of cork to an everyday consumer is a daunting task. "That's what the challenge is with marketing cork flooring. There are so many great benefits to the floor, but of course the entry end of the category is always style. It has to be pretty for the customer to put it in her house; there's a certain taste level. But when it comes to benefits, where do you start?"

Cork has actually been a flooring option for decades, but the designs of yesteryear do not compare to what technology allows for today. "Manufacturing of cork dates back to the early 1900s, with many cork floors installed in Europe and North America in the 1920s and 1930s still viable today," explained Margaret Buchholz, marketing and design, Capri Cork. "[Cork] is an 'old' proven flooring option, and as new fresh designs are available, it appeals to a broader group of buyers."

Producers of cork recognize the importance of modern



While many consumers believe cork may not be appropriate for certain areas of the home, such as the kitchen, it can actually be installed throughout most residential environments.

who are responsible for getting the word out to consumers. Because cork has yet to become a widespread flooring choice in the United States, retailers must present the product as an option themselves; a consumer's specific request for cork is still rare.

According to Wicander, dealer-focused training and consumer awareness have helped WE Cork gain popularity. "The consumer is seeing the different visuals and ease of installation with all the benefits that no other floor can provide. The dealer training programs give comfort and confidence that enable the sale. The successful dealer does not wait for the customer to ask about cork, but offers it as an option instead of other hard surfaces and as a solution to problems like cold floors, arthritic joints, allergies, basement remodels, second-story sound issues and so on."

Creating cork appeal for consumers

The benefits of cork may still be secondary to the main selling points for most consumers: style and



Some cork companies use waste from the production of other cork products in the manufacturing of flooring. Amorim, for example, uses discarded material from its cork stoppers to create agglomerated cork layers for floors.

choice

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design and appealing visuals, driving them to research and invest in the latest technologies to manufacture the most attractive products. For example, Amorim, which oversees several cork brands, has “spearheaded the effort to incorporate digital printing into the comforts of cork,” said Michael Bennett, CEO, U.S.

A growing amount of retailers have, in fact, embraced cork and are witnessing an overwhelmingly positive response from consumers. As noted by Keeble, “As people become converts, when they’ve learned about cork and actually put it in their homes, they come back to it. You get repeat business with people who purchase cork.”

Alice DeGennaro, owner of Longleaf Lumber based in Cambridge, Mass., specializes in reclaimed flooring but decided to take on some other green products, including cork, about 15 years ago. While Longleaf doesn’t manufacture its own cork, DeGennaro chose to add cork to her inventory for customers who don’t believe reclaimed flooring is the right product for them.

“I like cork because it is a renewable product,” DeGennaro said. “It doesn’t kill the tree. Cork is a great option for people who want to be green, who care about the environment. Plus, cork is anti-bacterial and antimicrobial and offers comfort underfoot.”

Ease and speed of installation are additional selling points for cork, which affects price, as well, according to DeGennaro. “Our regular product can be more expensive, especially because it has to be finished after installation,” she explained. “A lot of cork products are pre-finished; you put the cork down and you can walk on it the next day. The floating options just click together, so in a day your floor is done and you’re walking on it.”

Carpet Plus in Charlottesville, Va., also sees a number of satisfied customers thanks to cork purchases. Like DeGennaro, Duane Cassis, owner of Carpet Plus, has been successful in selling green products. Because the surrounding area of the store is home to many “earth friendly” people, Cassis sells his fair share of cork flooring.

“In some areas people struggle with [selling cork], but here it’s something people gravitate

to,” he said. “The people in this area are willing to spend a little more for environmentally friendly products.”

Cassis displays cork at the front of his showroom, mainly because people are attracted to the visuals of cork, he said. While some consumers may begin their shopping experiences with a different type of flooring in mind, once they see cork and learn about its benefits, it becomes the top choice.

“A lot of people come in thinking they’re looking for wood, but they go back and choose cork,” Cassis noted. “Many consumers also think cork may not be a wise choice

for kitchen applications, but we actually sell it quite often for that part of the home, mainly because of the visuals offered and comfort underfoot. Cork really doesn’t present any additional issues with things like water in comparison to other flooring types. We try to let the consumer know of any concerns and they make their own decisions, but usually they go for cork.”

Bark from cork oaks is harvested about every nine years and regenerates for the duration of the trees’ lifespan, categorizing cork as a rapidly renewable material.



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