

Advantages and Disadvantages of Bamboo Flooring

Bamboo flooring is a relative newcomer to the North American market. Currently the quality of this product is pretty inconsistent, with consumers complaining of floors being easily scratched and dented, susceptibility to color fading, and offgassing of Volatile Organic Compounds used in the finishes causing headaches and allergic reactions.



Because there are so many manufacturers trying to cash in on the market demand for bamboo flooring, it is important that you research the product and pick a reputable manufacturer. How to tell the good stuff from the bad? One thing you can do is to take home a few different samples and do a little non-destructive testing. Try scratching them with various materials and objects. Does the sample dent easily? Watch how it reacts to moisture- water stains, warps and shrinkage.

Variables to Be Aware Of

There are many variables involved, and many varieties of bamboo. The planks can be vertical or horizontal grain, laminated, strand woven or engineered, the wood can be from, old growth or new growth bamboo, and the type of carbonizing used for the coloring. So there is a lot to consider.

Which to choose? Horizontal grain Bamboo with natural shade will be the hardest and most durable of these products, next hardest is vertical grain with natural shade, followed by horizontal grain with a caramelized shade, and lastly the vertical grain with caramelized shade is the least hard, but even that is still harder than white oak flooring.

Always keep in mind that hardness is dependent upon manufacturer and the maturity of the bamboo, and that any bamboo of less than 5 years old growth will be likely not to be hard enough for a long-lasting floor. We recommend you avoid the lower priced imported product, under 3\$/square foot is usually pretty hit and miss.

Domestic brand names such as Teragren have their own grading standards which ensure quality. Domestic manufacturers also have Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) available which will list any hazards and toxicity issues which could be linked to the binders and finishes used. Overseas product will be a total roll of the dice as far as that goes.

Hardness and durability

Bamboo flooring is extremely hard and interestingly, is stronger than many hardwoods. Some species have been rated higher than maple and almost double that of the red oak. It is also extremely resilient and can take tougher treatment from dropped, heavy items than a lot of hardwoods because it resists denting.

Another of bamboo flooring's advantages is that it is highly moisture resistant. After all, it is a tropical grass – not a wood – and has already been subjected to humidity, rain and other elements. It resists spills beautifully and so is an excellent choice for bathrooms and kitchens. Try installing hardwood in those rooms! Being a laminated product, bamboo flooring is less likely than hardwoods to cup, warp or gap.

An environmental darling

The world's precious natural resources are ever-depleting so materials that are more readily sustainable are growing in popularity. Bamboo's advantage is that it matures to around 50 feet and can be harvested within 5 years and then re-grows on the same plant, over and over again! A single hardwood tree takes at least thirty years to be ready to use and deforestation is a serious problem in some parts of the world. Even plantation forests, purely designed to produce wood are not as environmentally friendly as bamboo's ongoing re-use.

Easy on the legs

Anyone who spends long hours cooking in the kitchen will know that hard floors can be extremely tiresome on feet and legs. Bamboo, although a very hard material, is actually much kinder to the body.

Easy to clean

Cleaning methods are another advantage of bamboo flooring. All it really needs is a sweep to remove dust and other walk-in particles and a mop once a week or so.

Disadvantages

Now as for the disadvantages of bamboo flooring, they are mostly related to good consumerism. There are varying qualities of materials and you should always go for the best you can afford. Also, bamboo flooring sometimes can't be floated. You'll need to find out what type of restrictions apply to installation before you choose the actual material you buy.

Some homeowners report that their bamboo floors are more brittle than they would expect from hardwood and that they don't take too well to dropping heavy items on them. Frankly, even cement floors chip under a substantial impact. All floors should be treated with due care and attention, but that doesn't make bamboo any less of a performer than it is.

In general, bamboo floors are easy wearing, simple to keep clean, highly attractive and very stable. Their big selling point is sustainability, a feature that will continue to grow in relevance and importance over coming generations, and which may even result in better pricing than what is currently available.

Before making your choice, weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of bamboo flooring, talk to consultants about the possibility of self installation and shop around so that you get the best choice for your home and lifestyle.

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