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# interiors+sources

A purple-tinted background image showing several people in a laboratory or office setting, engaged in work. There are bookshelves and people looking at documents.

## Lab Work

Perkins and Will studies materials and their impact on health

A purple-tinted background image showing a person standing in an open office space with glass partitions.

## OPEN OFFICE DEBATE THE LOOK OF WOOD ECO-FRIENDLY LIGHTING





**1.** Feelwood is EGGER Wood Products' collection of durable, lifelike woodgrain decors, which work for accent walls and backsplashes. *COURTESY OF EGGER WOOD PRODUCTS*

**2.** The Excursion HDP collection features wood-look porcelain tiles. *COURTESY OF FLORIDA TILE INC.* **3.** Maple veneer creates a neutral look. *COURTESY OF NEW LEAF PERFORMANCE VENEERS*

**4.** The long, fibrous strands of Lonstrand Topseal visually expand even small spaces. *COURTESY OF LONSEAL* **5.** New Leaf Performance Veneers creates wood-look veneers that resist sunlight, water, impact and other elements that can prematurely age traditional wood products. *COURTESY OF NEW LEAF PERFORMANCE VENEERS*



# TIMELESSNESS WITHOUT THE TREES

Alternatives to solid wood let you create classic nature-inspired designs without the weight and cost.

**T**imeless and classic, wood flooring and furnishings are long-time favorites in interior design for their beauty and flexibility. Wood lends itself to spaces as varied as a bustling corporate office to a calming yoga studio and provides an easy connection to nature.

"Every now and then, we hear how some designers are tired of wood flooring, but the reality is wood is never going to go away," says Lace Greene-Cordts, marketing manager for Lonseal, a flooring company whose low-VOC vinyl sheet flooring includes several wood looks. "Wood is both safe and creative for a designer to work with. Any type of wood design, from soft plank to an exotic design, can fit any residential or commercial space without taking away from the overall theme of the intended design area."

Many designers are turning to wood alternatives over solid wood. Wood flooring is beautiful, but it's also expensive, heavy and vulnerable to moisture, and softer species can show their age quickly. Today's wood floor alternatives are much more realistic than previous generations of wood replacements, and promise a floor that's lower in maintenance, higher in comfort and just as attractive as solid wood.

## WOOD LOOKS WITH ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

There are nearly as many alternative materials for wood as there are applications in which to use them. Designers are spoiled with choices when it comes to wood-look materials, with options that include:

### SHEET VINYL

Sheet vinyl is a perfect fit for applications with heavy foot traffic and frequent cleaning, like healthcare and hospitality spaces. Its surface can be sterilized, unlike real wood, and the large rolls it's typically sold in let you create a seamless surface with no gaps to trap germs.

"Although beautiful, real wood scars, and it's easy to damage in places where bodies are in motion — places where people are walking, rolling carts or exercising," explains Bo Barber, vice president of sales and marketing for Ecore. The company's Forest Rx vinyl sheet collection includes 11 wood grain patterns. An impact-absorbing backing, like Ecore's vulcanized composition rubber or Lonseal's cushiony underlayment, improves comfort underfoot and helps control sound transmission.

## MODERN LAMINATES AND VENEERS

Laminates that pair wood with other sturdy materials allow you to incorporate some real wood without the drawbacks of solid wood products.

EGGER Wood Products' TFL (Thermally Fused Laminate) line combines sustainably harvested wood chips, wood particles and environmentally friendly resins with digital designs that replicate natural wood visually and tactilely, says David Smith, product manager for EGGER Wood Products.

NewLeaf Performance Veneers also incorporates some wood while avoiding the issues inherent to solid wood. The company uses veneers from responsibly harvested wood species and sandwiches them between a strong backer and a high-performance polyurethane topcoat.

"The exclusive topcoat applied over the visual layer refracts light in a way that allows the depth and clarity of the woodgrain to show through, maintaining that natural wood look," explains Gwen Petter, NewLeaf's product design director.

## PORCELAIN

Durable porcelain tiles resist moisture, denting and scratching, but can be crafted to look just like wood with high-quality graphics. Florida Tile, which has nine collections of wood-look porcelain tile, uses a large number of wood visuals in each tile collection so projects will have fewer repeats – similar to how different planks of wood are never exactly the same.

## 5 TOP TRENDS IN WOOD FLOORING AND FURNISHINGS

Wood and wood-look products have always been reliable design elements, but they're enjoying a resurgence now because of the resimercial design trend, says Petter.

Commercial uses of wood echo the family dining table, kitchen cabinets, beds, bookshelves and other important residential furnishings. "Designers are pulling the comforting elements of residential design into commercial spaces, and wood is a huge part of that," Petter adds. "People respond to that familiarity and warmth."

Designers' and clients' taste in wood is also evolving, adds Barber. Where

designers once favored red- and yellow-toned woods, Barber is seeing wood **color trends** move toward "dark brown, greige (gray-beige) and gray wood colors."

In that same vein, **color variation** is no longer as important to designers as it once was, says Tressa Samdal, director of marketing and product management for Florida Tile. "Rustic was all the rage five to 10 years ago, but now there is strong opposition to the honey and red tones of the past," Samdal adds. "We are also seeing more creativity in the installation applications, such as chevrons, herringbones, mixing of color tones and adding borders."

Designers who prize sustainability are **moving away from exotic woods**, especially species that don't come with proof of sourcing, Samdal adds. That's not surprising, given green certifications' emphasis on sourcing products locally and responsibly. However, Samdal notes that the resistance to exotic wood species has even spilled over into porcelain designs that don't contain real wood.

**New applications for wood looks**, like walls and large furnishings (such as counters), are growing in popularity, notes Greene-Cordts. Moving away from solid wood means the weight of wood is no longer an issue, so designers are free to bend wood look products into new shapes and specify new colors.

**Realistic textures** play a part in selecting wood looks for those new applications, too, adds Smith; embossed finishes that mimic real wood textures amplify the visual effect of wood look products. This is true even when wood look products are used in places that solid wood can't be, such as curved reception desks.

These trends will continue to shift, but one thing that won't is the need to specify surfaces with the right qualities for each application, Barber says. Determine the acoustical performance, slip resistance, underfoot comfort and other qualities each project needs, then use that to narrow down your design choices.

"Flooring selection can no longer be based on color and cost alone," says Barber. "Surfaces that are attractive, provide an ergonomic solution and offer a quieter environment should be considered first." **PS**



**6.** Excursion HDP porcelain tiles by Florida Tile channels the character of reclaimed dead fall wood, knots, splits and ash grain visuals. The collection includes five wood looks. *COURTESY OF FLORIDA TILE* **7.** Lonseal offers low-VOC vinyl sheet flooring that includes several wood looks. The Lonstrand Topseal line includes eight colors. *COURTESY OF LONSEAL* **8.** The New Leaf Performance Veneers collection includes 37 combinations of wood species, veneer cuts and stains, including Rose Wood. *COURTESY OF NEW LEAF PERFORMANCE VENEERS*

