

## What is cork?



A member of the beech family, the cork oak tree grows in coastal regions of the Mediterranean. Relatively slow growing, these trees survive harsh conditions in depleted soil that will support little else of value. There are examples of cork oak trees that are 400 to 500 years old though the average life expectancy would be 100 to 120 years.

Unlike most trees where primary value is derived from the lumber of the trunk, cork is actually obtained from the bark of the tree. This unusually thick bark is made up of millions of tiny prism-

shaped air pockets which create a resilient cushiony surface and lead to the assertion that, with cork, you are literally "walking on air". Grown on farms and harvested every 9 to 11 years, the financial benefit lies not in felling these trees but in keeping them alive and in production for generations.

The ability to use cork in flooring applications was not discovered until the 19th century when American, John Smith, discovered agglomerated cork. Today, cork flooring is created from the post-industrial by-product of the bottle-stopper industry. This 'waste' material is ground up and then formed into sheets using minimal amounts of adhesive to bind the particles together under high pressure. The size, quantity, and type of cork granule in conjunction with varying degrees of pressure make the difference between 'bulletin board' material and material suitable for flooring applications.

Historically, cork floors were finished in the same manner as any other wood flooring, i.e. with a paste wax buffed into the surface. However, the labor-intensive nature of maintenance was seen as a real drawback when rolled sheet vinyl and similar 'modern' resilient surface options came on the market mid last century. Cork flooring fell out of favor and for perhaps 30 years was not readily available to the average consumer.

New finishing techniques and improved technologies have revived interest in cork in the past ten years. Though still a small fraction of the overall floor coverings market, cork is enjoying a surge in popularity driven in large part by consumer demand. What does cork have to offer setting it apart from other surface flooring materials? Quite a bit it turns out. In fact, no other floor covering can match the



## Why choose cork?

### Durable and Easy to Maintain

Pre-finished Natural CORK flooring is protected with 5 coats of durable UV cured acrylic finish. Regular maintenance requires only routine sweeping and vacuuming to avoid build up of abrasive particles. Spills should be cleaned up right away. Use only cleaners specified for use on pre-finished hardwood available from your local retailer or home center. Wet maintenance is entirely forbidden. Your well maintained cork floor will last for decades of enjoyment.

### Comfortable

Cork provides a comfortable cushion underfoot as it gives under compression. Because Cork "bounces back", recovery from marks left by furniture will leave minimal residual indentation, less noticeable than on wood, carpet or vinyl floors.

### Fire Resistant

Cork is a fire inhibitor that does not spread flame. Cork will not produce toxic gases on combustion.

### Thermally and Acoustically Insulated

Cork contains over 100 million prism-shaped cells per cubic inch. These air-filled cells allow cork to provide excellent thermal and acoustic insulation. The inherent resiliency of cork provides a comfortable cushion that is gentle on feet, back and joints. With cork flooring, walking barefoot in the bedroom or bathroom on a cold night doesn't have to be an unpleasant experience. In addition to providing a comfortable cushion underfoot, cork's unique air-filled cells and unique ability to bounce back reduce noise, making cork the perfect alternative for multi-level housing developments, office spaces, museums, and houses of worship.

