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**Environmentally-Friendly "Earth Homes"**

**By Lady Camelot**

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What are "Earth Homes?" Earth homes are houses that are basically constructed from the earth. Some earth homes are built from adobe, mud, straw or even underground as an earth-sheltered home. Environmentally friendly, earth homes are easy to warm and cool and extremely energy efficient.

Adobe Earth homes are houses constructed from bricks comprised of tightly compacted earth, clay and straw. Adobe earth homes can be naturally waterproofed by using fermented cactus juice!

Earth sheltered earth homes are houses that are constructed underground – or at least mostly beneath the ground surface. Surrounding soil is a superb and natural insulation which makes these homes cheap to heat and cool. Usually installed in a well-drained hillside, earth sheltered homes have a skylight window that can fill the home with natural sunlight. Although costs may run a bit higher than conventional home construction, earth sheltered homes are a good, long-term investment as lowered maintenance and energy savings make up the difference.

Straw Bale earth homes are making a comeback as well. Straw bale earth homes are obviously constructed of straw and grass, are energy efficient, and can cut material building costs by as much as fifty percent.

Earth homes, such as Cob Houses are built from clay-type lumps of soil, sand and straw. Similar to the adobe homes, except cob earth homes do not use bricks or blocks. Cob homes have walls that are sculpted into smooth forms. Again, very energy efficient, cob homes are well-suited for the very cold climates and deserts.

Rammed earth homes may have over 18-inch, thick walls that are made from a combination of dirt, sand, cement and water. Energy conservative, rammed earth homes have the appearance of bungalow-style charm and help keep the house warm in winter and cool in the summer. Additionally,

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rammed earth homes may last hundreds of years.

Why build an earth home? Earth homes conserve energy, and in most cases are easier to maintain and can endure for years to come. An excellent site to visit on earth homes: [www.hobbithomes.ca](http://www.hobbithomes.ca) This particular site even has a recipe for building your own "cob" earth home, and other projects as well.

As we embark on a strange, new age and global warming continuously on the rise, doesn't it make sense to construct your new custom home as an earth home?

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Lady Camelot serves as the Public Relations' Director for [HolisticJunction.com](http://HolisticJunction.com) and is the published author of "Windows to the Soul." She has had several poems published in esteemed anthologies, is a freelance writer, artist and more recently has had her literature inducted into the Ellis Island Library in tribute to the events of 911.

### **Consumer Trend Alert – Environment-Friendly Home Improvement Flooring Products Gain Mass**

#### **Appeal**

**By William Thomas**

One of the first things home owners think of when embarking on a home improvement project is pulling up that dusty, stained and frayed old carpet. The next step is deciding what to put in its place – new carpet or some other type of flooring.

A trendy new craze sweeping the country is to replace existing carpet with environmentally friendly flooring such as reclaimed wood, linoleum, cork or bamboo. Such types of flooring are not only helpful to the environment, but are also coveted for their exquisite beauty, texture and form.

People are fast realizing the dangers of using products for the home that can be detrimental to the environment and to the residents who live in the home.

Jumping on the bandwagon, architects, builders and decorators are suggesting flooring products that protect the environment and the people who live and work in the buildings.

#### **Advantages of Choosing Environment-Friendly Flooring Over Carpeting**

If you've ever pulled up used carpeting in a home or other heavily-trafficked area, you've probably been

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aghast at the debris and filth hidden in the carpet and padding. The truth is that no matter how fanatical you are about vacuuming and shampooing your carpet, residue, mold and mildew will accumulate in the fibers beneath. The carpet then becomes an allergen magnet, hording germs that can affect humans and pets who come in contact with it.

Besides the advantage of avoiding allergens, the durability and beauty of wood or other environmentally correct floorings remains undisputed. It is easily cleaned and comes in a wide variety of patterns and colors to fit any décor.

Linoleum is resilient and is made from renewable substances of the earth or recycled remnants, but linoleum itself cannot be recycled because of the glue used to install it. Still, the long life gained from using linoleum has made it a popular choice for homes and offices.

The use of "reclaimed" wood found in old buildings such as barns, hotels or railroad cars is an emerging trend across the country. While the obvious character and patina of these woods are lovely and desirable, the cost can be somewhat prohibitive at around \$30 per square foot. Furthermore, shoppers need to be careful to ensure they buy from a trusted source. There is also the danger of running out of wood before the project is completed if you aren't sure to measure correctly and buy the right amount of materials.

Newer products, such as cork and bamboo are excellent choices to use in buildings that have energy savers such as radiant heat. Besides saving on energy costs, cork and bamboo can be bought for much less than wood and still have the "green tag" of being friendly to the environment.

### **Transform Your Home or Office with Cork or Bamboo Flooring**

The rapid disappearances of our forests and rainforests have led to the research and development of new products in flooring and the reemergence of some old favorites. Cork and bamboo are forerunners in this endeavor.

Cork flooring has been popular in the United States since the 1950s. The avocado and gold colored carpet of the 70s temporarily replaced its prominence in the flooring market, but cork has now found new acceptance in environmentally conscious homes.

Anti-microbial and cushiony soft, cork is an ideal choice for parents who want to keep their homes free of allergens and also enjoy a tranquil existence by diminishing noise.

Bamboo flooring is both resilient and beautiful. Its colors, ranging from natural to amber, create an excellent background for any style of furniture or accessories. The durability of bamboo makes it a superior choice, and because of its rapid growth, bamboo usage helps to preserve our forests.

While bamboo is lightweight, it is as hard as oak, maple or redwood and has the added advantages of expanding and contracting less. It comes in tongue and groove planks for ease of installation. What's more, bamboo's natural imperfections lend an air of exclusivity to its look.

## Jump On the "Build Green" Bandwagon When You Build or Renovate

Almost every decorating or architectural magazine that you see on the stands contains at least one article about being environmentally conscious when you build or renovate.

Indeed, there are many types of flooring that you can select to conserve energy and preserve our forests and other resources while avoiding excessive costs or future problems. Choosing the appropriate flooring for your home or office is a major decision – one that you will probably live with for a long time.

Choose wisely and "build green" whenever you can. It's a great way to show that you care about our earth and its future.

By William Thomas. For more information please visit our

and

consumer guides.



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