

Why Bamboo Works for You | January, 2009 | by Tom LeBlanc

The fast-growing, durable material isn't just for eco-friendly homes; it's also becoming very hip.



You don't have to be a marketing genius or an economic wizard to realize that builders ought to be doing everything they can do to differentiate their products. Selling homes has never been more critical.

Use of bamboo is a clever and simple way for builders to make their homes stand out to prospective buyers. The fresh, lighter shade alternative to traditional wood also has a good story for builders to tell.

Often used in flooring, Bamboo is similar in appearance to wood flooring, but it's offered in light or honey color - different enough to make people look down and take note.

These days, however, bamboo isn't limited to flooring. Cabinetmaker Mike Schieber at Real-Wood Products, La Crosse, Wis., recently used bamboo to create a 13-foot by 9-foot entertainment cabinet.

Schieber began by purchasing several 4-foot by 8-foot sheets of 3/4-inch-thick bamboo plywood. The sheets were adhered together to form various levels of thickness. After the glue dried, the sheets were cut to shape and pieced together.

Real-Wood Products worked with integrator Audio Video Pros, Onalaska, Wis. Its installers carefully cut away cavities for a 58-inch flat-panel TV, three speakers and two subwoofers.

The entertainment cabinet ended up costing the homeowners about 25 percent more than an oak cabinet would have cost, but it offers a different kind of value. Not only does it have a unique and fresh look, but the homeowners have a compelling, eco-friendly story to tell.

According to the National Association of Home Builders Research Center's resource Toolbase.org, alternatives to traditional wood make sense for builders - and the environment.

Bamboo, cork and eucalyptus grow twice as fast as conventional woods like cherry, oak and maple. Materials made from these alternative materials will last as long as traditional wood as long as they are properly maintained, according to Toolbase.org.

Builders can feel good about using bamboo, since it has less of an effect on the environment. According to the Environmental Bamboo Foundation, some species of bamboo can grow up to 1 meter per day, making it a highly renewable natural resource.