

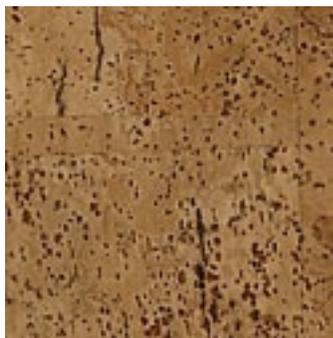
Pop the Cork

cork as an alternative flooring material

Pop the Question

What is the first thought that pops into your head when you hear the word “cork”? Cabernet or Chardonnay most likely. But beyond the bubbly, cork is being reinvented in its uses, and is making its way into flooring and wall coverings solutions for commercial facilities.

Cork is produced from the bark of cork oaks which are typically found in western Mediterranean countries. Ideal as a renewable source of material, cork tree bark can be harvested every nine to fourteen years over and over again.



What made cork ideal for use in bottling and now for use throughout commercial facilities is that cork is made primarily of suberin. Suberin is a hydrophobic substance whose main feature is the ability to resist water. That, combined with the millions of air cells which promote elasticity—allow cork to function as a great shock absorber.

Composed of mostly air (almost 90%), cork offers excellent thermal and insulation properties. Cork feels “warm” when walked on, and its use lowers the level of sound transmission and room reverberations.

Cork’s impact resistance feature produces a more durable flooring than typical wood. When it is subjected to pressure, the air cells collapse rather than the material being crushed. After the initial impact has taken place, the air cells refill and returns it to its original shape. This characteristic is what gives cork its rebound effect and is what makes it comfortable to walk on.

Everything old is new again

While cork flooring and walls are becoming more popular as of late for both aesthetic and functional reasons, it has been installed in buildings for nearly 100 years. Some notable installations include:

- US Library of Congress, Washington DC
- First Congregational Church, Chicago, IL
- New York City Public Library, New York, NY
- Rockefeller University Library, New York, NY

For facilities looking to go green, and promote energy efficiency, cork is a cost effective solution. The fact that its use is also synonymous with champagne and celebration, might just put a little more spring in your step.

