

**essential** Flooring Special Report

# The first step in design

Natural flooring materials are environmentally sound and the latest trend, writes **Melinda Ham**.



Fabulous finish ... whether it's vinyl from Harvey Norman (left) or designer rugs from Tsar (right), people want beautiful and durable designs for their floors.

RICHARD LOCK has been selling and installing bamboo as a flooring material for the past nine years. While his business started off providing a niche product for environmentally conscious buyers, in the past 18 months or so it has become mainstream.

"People have a greater understanding about how they are affecting the planet but, at the same time, many buy bamboo because of its competitive pricing and performance," says Lock, of Bamboo Floors in Sydney.

Bamboo is not the only material that's resonating more with buyers of floor coverings. There's an increasing trend towards natural materials, including recycled timber, stone, sisal and wool — products that are timeless.

More people are shunning notions of a "throw-away" society, says architect Caroline Pidcock. They realise that every choice they make when building and furnishing their home can have an environmental impact.

"My clients are incredibly particular and

they realise that the biggest part of sustainability is to find solutions that are both beautiful and durable, that they will love and care for and keep."

Selecting more responsible and natural flooring is part of a growing trend across home decoration, says Kate Perkins, a trend forecaster and product development consultant.

"Flooring is a big financial investment and people want to know about the chemical treatments, the smell, the glues, the adhesives and

that there are no volatile emissions. It's the same as the paint or the finishes they use and other building materials."

**TIMBER**

Timber floors remain a favourite. And because recycled timber has its "story" and is environmentally friendly, it's particularly "chic and trendy" at the moment, says Andrea Rabe, sales manager at Precision Flooring.

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