

Frequently Asked Questions - Bamboo Flooring

As with any product, it is important to have confidence in the quality, durability and consistency of the bamboo flooring that you select. Here are some questions you may wish to ask as you search for the right bamboo product and the right bamboo supplier.

1. Is all Bamboo Flooring alike?

Although it may all look the same, quality from different manufacturers and suppliers may differ greatly. The quality of the finished product is highly dependent on the quality of the raw materials used in the manufacture of the flooring and also the manufacturing process itself.

We urge you to be wary of cheaper bamboo flooring on the market. Whilst they may look the same, the difference in the way the floor performs can be massive. Cutting costs during manufacture to achieve a cheaper product means the floor is less stable and more likely to move, cup and warp.

It is for this reason that Plantation has spent many years building our relationship directly with our supplier and partner (Moso International), who is the global leader in the development, manufacture and supply of bamboo flooring and other bamboo products. Our supplier conducts thorough inspections of the production facilities and the raw materials ensuring the highest quality is maintained. Plantation bamboo products are made especially for us and our New Zealand climate and environment, with the appropriate moisture content.

2. Does it matter who I buy from?

We believe it does. The bamboo flooring market is competitive and relatively easy to enter. Be sure to investigate all options to ensure that you are dealing with a reliable company that offers not just a great price and a variety of coordinating products, but can also provide product specifications, data sheets and manufacturing information, as well as good warranties, sound installation practices and prompt technical support services.

3. Why Plantation?

Plantation Bamboo is New Zealand's only bamboo specialist bamboo importer and seller. "Bamboo is all we do!" We supply premium quality bamboo products, have an experienced team and are well known as market leaders in bamboo building-related materials – being in New Zealand for over 12 years, with more than 1000 satisfied customers.

The team at Plantation are here to help you with any queries you might have. Our customers include New Zealand's leading home building companies, architects, designers, builders, and numerous homeowners.

We are a reliable company. One that offers not only a solid product base and great price, but also comprehensive warranties, technical and installation support, manufacturing information and thorough product testing.

With warehouses in Auckland and Christchurch, we offer our services direct to customers and deliver our products New Zealand wide.

4. Our supplier

We have an exclusive partnership with our supplier MOSO International (moso.eu). With over 20 years in the relatively young bamboo industry, MOSO International is the pioneer in innovative bamboo solutions for indoors and outdoors. MOSO, with its head office in the Netherlands, is recognised as the global A-brand in bamboo because of its focus on sustainability, product quality and innovation. With constant attention to technical improvements our supplier is leading the way with the largest and most prestigious use of bamboo in the world.

With their own research and development team, our supplier is going into sectors of business that no one conceived of two decades ago, for example; bamboo wind turbine blades, bamboo automotive dashboards, bamboo airport ceiling structures and the list goes on!

With regular visits between ourselves and our partners, Plantation has products and access to our supplier's range that no other bamboo supplier in New Zealand can offer.

5. Will the colour be the same as the sample supplied?

Bamboo is a natural product therefore colour can vary from board to board and batch to batch. The general colour tone may be different to samples supplied. It's important that you check the colour prior to installation to ensure you are happy with it.

The bamboo flooring is normally mixed between boxes before it is installed to give a random look – all part of the beauty of bamboo.

6. Does bamboo flooring squeak or creak?

Our bamboo flooring has a wax coating on the joins, to help seal the boards and reduce friction when walked on. Normally there are no creaking noises when walked on, unless the sub-floor is not level or has bumps in it., causing floorboard movement. Movement of the boards leads to squeaking/creaking noises.

7. How does bamboo compare in hardness to hardwood timber flooring?

Hardness is the main factor in durability. Depending on when the bamboo is harvested and how it is manufactured, depends on how hard the end product is.

We ensure the bamboo used in all our products is harvested at maturity (5-6years) when the fibre density peaks.

As a result, Plantation bamboo flooring is significantly harder than other timbers used for flooring applications.

Numerous tests have been carried out globally and results show that for example compressed bamboo is 80% harder than kwila and more than twice as hard as oak! While most natural timber floors will dent over time, it is difficult to dent compressed bamboo flooring.

Please refer to the Janka hardness graph, available as part of our technical downloads.

8. What happens if my floor gets flooded?

Generally, if your floor is flooded the floor will most likely need to be replaced (most often via an insurance claim). If you have been able to clean up the excess water immediately, this can be avoided. As with most timber floors the severity of the flood will dictate the damage to your bamboo flooring. Our bamboo flooring has a wax coating on all edges, which helps create a tight seal when the boards are locked together, preventing water penetrating the core of the bamboo.

9. Does dirt build up between the boards?

The bamboo flooring has a tight click-locking system on all four edges, which results in a tight join with little room for dirt to penetrate.

By following our care and cleaning guide (available as a technical download) you will not have any issues with dirt or dust build up. Our bamboo flooring is an easy to clean flooring option.

10. Can my bamboo floor be sanded and how many times can it be re-sanded?

Yes, our compressed bamboo flooring can be professionally sanded and re-finished several times over its lifetime.

11. What about light scratches?

Surface scratches can be polished out using Rice Bran oil, or the oil from the nut of a walnut. For more stubborn scratches or deeper gouges, a product like Briwax can be rubbed in to fill the scratch. Briwax is available through leading hardware stores. It is recommended to have felt pads on the feet of chairs and furniture to reduce the likelihood of scratching.

12. Can bamboo flooring be used in bathrooms?

A bathroom is a challenging environment for natural flooring such as bamboo, because there can be a lot of humidity and moisture in the air and excessive water can often be left on the floor surface. For this reason, we do not recommend using bamboo flooring in bathrooms.

If you do choose to install bamboo in the bathroom, then ensure it is well ventilated and any puddles of water are mopped up quickly. Some customers successfully have bamboo flooring in their bathrooms, aware of the commonsense required in managing the environment.

Caulking compound (such as lock seal) can be applied between the joints to help seal the floor. This will make the floor more water-resistant, but not completely waterproof it.

Please note our warranty does not cover bamboo floors that are installed in a bathroom.

13. Can bamboo flooring be used in laundries?

Yes, Plantation bamboo flooring can be installed in a laundry, providing the room is well ventilated and humidity levels are maintained within the required range.

14. Does bamboo flooring react to changes in temperature & humidity?

It is important to take your environment and climate into consideration when choosing bamboo flooring.

Local conditions or even a micro- climate within your home can influence the performance of bamboo flooring. This is not a product defect, but rather the effect of the surrounding environment.

Exposure to extreme temperatures and humidity can negatively affect your bamboo floor's overall performance. Plantation bamboo flooring is manufactured with 10-12% moisture content (to suit New Zealand's climate).

In addition, the recommended air humidity level for bamboo flooring to perform at its best is 40-65%.

15. Does bamboo cup and warp?

It's perfectly normal for a floor to expand and contract as moisture levels in the atmosphere vary according to the season. Even floors that are over a century old will be changing with the seasons

However, a bamboo floor that cups or warps is invariably due to incorrect installation or improper care and use (eg. excess water, such as flooding).

Both bamboo and any other timber can swell or warp especially if it has been glued to a "green" or damp concrete subfloor. This allows moisture from the concrete to expand the bottom of the plank at a faster rate than the top of the floor, causing cupping. Our recommendation is to "float" over new concrete floors, on top of a good quality underlay (with a moisture barrier).

Other effects are excess tightening which can cause the floor to 'raft' or 'crown', if there is not enough expansion allowed at the edges. This is an installation issue, which results from uneven or insufficient expansion gaps and is usually easy to remedy.

Acclimatising solid boards on site for several days is also good practice. Please refer to our Installation Instructions (available as a technical download).

16. Why don't we grow Bamboo in New Zealand?

The bamboo species we use for all our bamboo products is *Phyllostachys Pubescens* (common name: Moso), the "giant" bamboo species. It is harvested at maturity at 5-6 years for maximum stability and hardness. Moso grows prolifically in China as the climate is ideal for the growth of this particular species of bamboo.

Moso bamboo can grow up to full height in as little as six or seven weeks, but then it must be left to thicken and mature properly before it is cut and used for our various flooring, decking and panel products.

17. What should I know about the polyurethane finish?

We use world leading German Treffert water-based polyurethane on all our compressed and elite bamboo flooring. There are 10 layers of fillers, sealers and polyurethane applied during the production process.

Our bamboo flooring is a low VOC product (according to the well recognised E1 European standard). This is important for indoor air quality, as VOCs at high levels are hazardous for health. VOCs are present in many building and interior products, including carpet, vinyl, paint and adhesives.

18. What about stairs?

We have stair nosings to match our compressed bamboo flooring. These are glued down and locked in with the bamboo floor boards to make beautiful stairs.

You can also custom manufacture solid stair treads using our bamboo panels for exposed staircases.

Plantation works with partners who offer a full installation service of open and closed staircase systems.

19. What is a floating floor and why are they recommended?

A floating floor is one that is clicked together and laid over a special underlay, much like carpet. This installation method is quick, with little disruption – it can be walked on instantly.

A floating floor is also cost effective as underlay is cheaper than adhesive. There's no need to move out while the floor is installed as is often necessary with a glued floor, which must be allowed to cure before being walked on.

The floating floor is covered around the edges by skirting boards, kitchen cabinets, or aluminum trims. It can be described as a 'gravity floor' as the weight and mass of the bamboo gives it a solid feel underfoot, not dissimilar to a glued floor.

As environmental conditions vary throughout the year, the floor continually adjusts, this natural expansion and contraction is covered by the expansion allowed at the perimeters. This won't be seen as this is covered by your skirting boards and trims.

20. What is the difference between a floating and glued down floor?

A glued floor is permanently fixed to the subfloor with a specialised flexible adhesive. This must be left to cure properly before the floor can be walked on.

A floating floor uses the gravity or mass weight of the product along with perimeter trims to hold it in place. Floating floors also use a special underlay which is crush-proof, provides comfort cushioning, acoustic and moisture management, as well as being an excellent draught excluder!

A floating floor is slightly softer to walk on, while a glue down floor is subtly firmer.

21. I've heard bamboo is a sustainable choice?

Our bamboo comes from fully renewable forests, where it is selectively harvested on a 5-6 year cycle. Once cut, the culm will regrow from the base, just like any grass. Timber from trees can take from 30-70 years or even more to reach full maturity.

Bamboo also holds carbon dioxide in its root system. Research has shown that compared to trees and other plants, bamboo is much more efficient at dealing with atmospheric CO2 which is good news for climate change.

There is more CO2 absorbed during bamboo's growth, than what is given off during manufacture and transport, therefore it is negative CO2.

Bamboo is considered a top environmental choice by architects, builders, homeowners alike.

22. Are you not destroying the natural habitat and food source of Pandas?

Some people have expressed concern that the natural habitat and food supply of Pandas will be harmed by bamboo product manufacture.

There are over 1000 species of bamboo, and the type used for our products, Moso bamboo, is very different to that sought by Pandas and the manufacture of our products has no negative impact on the Panda's environment.

23. Will having a bamboo floor help if we suffer from allergies?

Yes, our bamboo flooring is considered hypo-allergenic and is very easy to keep dust free for those with dust mite and other allergies. We suggest using a damp micro-fibre mop which keeps dust levels very low.

You can clean without chemicals or detergents, which helps give excellent indoor air quality.

24. Will I be able to have under-floor heating?

Yes, it is possible to have under-floor heating with bamboo flooring, providing certain guidelines are followed. Please refer to the under-floor heating guidelines available as part of our technical downloads.

25. What order do I install flooring in the kitchen?

With a floating floor, we recommend the kitchen units are installed before the floor (so that the cabinetry does not "pin" the floor down). Leaving the fitting of toe-kicks and end panels, as well as waterfall bench tops off until after the floor has been installed, will ensure a much better finish. Your kitchen manufacturer can "pack" the cabinetry to allow for the height of the flooring. Also by installing the bamboo flooring around cabinetry, you save on the amount of flooring needed.

Take care to protect the floor from tradespeople and dragging furniture across the floor during and after the installation period.