



What Is The Value of Bamboo?

By Peter Carey

If the US Green Building Council has done one thing in a supremely effective manner, it has been to motivate interior designers to seek out sustainable materials for their projects. This has led to a wholesale desire within the design community to find the greenest, cheapest material available.

Under the banner of its rapidly-renewable capability, bamboo is an emblematic material that sends a strong environmental message when used in commercial interiors projects. Most know that bamboo is not a wood, but a very fast growing grass. With over 1,500 species across the globe, the image of bamboo is connected with China, where it resonates deeply with the population. "In China it is a cultural icon," said Eric Chan, president of ECCO Design and a native of China. "It is an enlightened element: spiritual, honest, fast growing, strong, and flexible. It embodies qualities most people would like to have for themselves."

The exotic nature of bamboo conjures up images of faraway places and remote jungles untouched by today's modern life. But, considered as a building material for commercial interiors, bamboo has greater compressive strength than concrete and about the same strength-to-weight ratio as steel in tension. On an ecological level, it releases 35% more oxygen than a comparable cluster of trees.

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