



Flooring: Top Floors, Best



Choices

What's the best flooring for you...and for your mid-century modern home?

BY TANJA KERN



This lady of the house may be lost in the 1950s, but that's okay. Vintage flooring materials, and even retro-looking products like these speckled patterns of rubber tile from Expanko, are back in vogue.

Too often, flooring is one of the last remodeling projects tackled in mid-century modern homes. It's no wonder—many homeowners consider it a mammoth endeavor.

There are more flooring materials available today than ever before, offering both fashion and function, but all of those options might leave you feeling confused about which works best for your home renewal. Before you make any investment of time or money in the project, consider some of the practical and aesthetic factors that will help you make the right decisions.

Choosing the right flooring hinges on many elements: lifestyle, floor plan, maintenance, budget, and overall appeal. "I have found that the cleaner and less fussy look works best when it comes to accentuating twentieth century modern architecture," says Bay Area interior designer Doyle McCullar. "The key to having a successful installation of new flooring is keeping in mind the end result you want to achieve and how it relates to your architecture."

Flooring plays an important role in the overall appeal and mood of a space, but looks aren't everything. Select the right materials and they will blend seamlessly into your lifestyle and the overall design of the home. Select the wrong material and someone could slip and fall, or the kitchen floor could go from spotless to splattered after one messy meal.

Each homeowner's criteria for choosing the best floor for them is different. People who live an active indoor/outdoor lifestyle might choose a hard surface that is easy to clean, stands up to heavy foot traffic (or the occasional cocktail party), and requires little maintenance. Families with younger children might prefer flooring that hides spills and stains and includes softer surfaces that are easy on little feet.

Health issues such as allergies, and maintenance are also important motivations behind flooring selection. Soft surfaces can be comfortable and stylish, but they can also trap dirt and dust mites more easily. Hard surfaces, while sometimes cooler in homes without radiant heat, can often be cleaned with sweeping a light mopping.

Floor plans can have a huge impact on flooring choices. For homes with open plans, using just one material throughout the house will help promote uniformity among the rooms and the different furnishings you choose. A single material also helps novice restorers keep their home design more clean-lined and uncluttered.



Bay Area interior designer Doyle McCullar

Pam and Paul Costa of Sunnyvale recently installed new concrete flooring throughout their newly remodeled Eichler. "We use a slight tint in the coloring, had it hand troweled, and finished with an acrylic coat," Pam explains. "We wanted it to flow seamlessly from room to room. We liked the modern feel of the concrete and decided that having one flooring through the house would really open things up and make it flow."



When Paul Parker purchased his Sunnyvale Eichler six years ago, there was a variety of flooring throughout the house: worn carpeting, vinyl, and ceramic tile. To avoid remodeling hassles later, he decided to replace the flooring in the majority of the house before move-in.

At first, he considered using ceramic tile throughout the house since it works well with radiant heat. But after visiting a local tile shop and noticing the slate-covered entry, he was sold on another idea.

"We fell in love with the idea of slate, and thought it would work well with the Eichler aesthetic," Parker says. "After some extensive shopping, we finally had 16x16-inch slate tiles installed in most areas of the house, including the living and dining rooms, master bedroom, hallways, and office."

He decided to use an engineered bamboo flooring (Plyboo) in the kitchen for its easier maintenance. "It turned out great and looks good with the neighboring slate," Parker says. The bathrooms received fresh 2x2-inch ceramic tiles.

"We had to change our mindset coming from a traditional house," Parker says. "We were accustomed to heavily-padded, carpeted floors, which are an extremely bad choice with our radiant heating. Once we got over that hurdle, it was fairly easy to identify what we liked and what matched the style we wanted to achieve."

Homeowners with more divided floor plans can sometimes get away with using more than one flooring material. Carol Bua and Todd Clark, who own an Eichler in Granada

Concrete staining and concrete micro-topping pours are popular flooring choices for modern homes today. Not only do these options look natural and unique at the same time, they are ideal for radiant-heated floors, as this young, barefooted Eichler dweller knows so well.

Hills, did just that. Instead of resurfacing their entire home in the vinyl composition tile (VCT) that was used in the original home construction, they decided to use it only in their kitchen. They opted for more elegant travertine in the living room and parquet in the bedrooms and the hallway.

