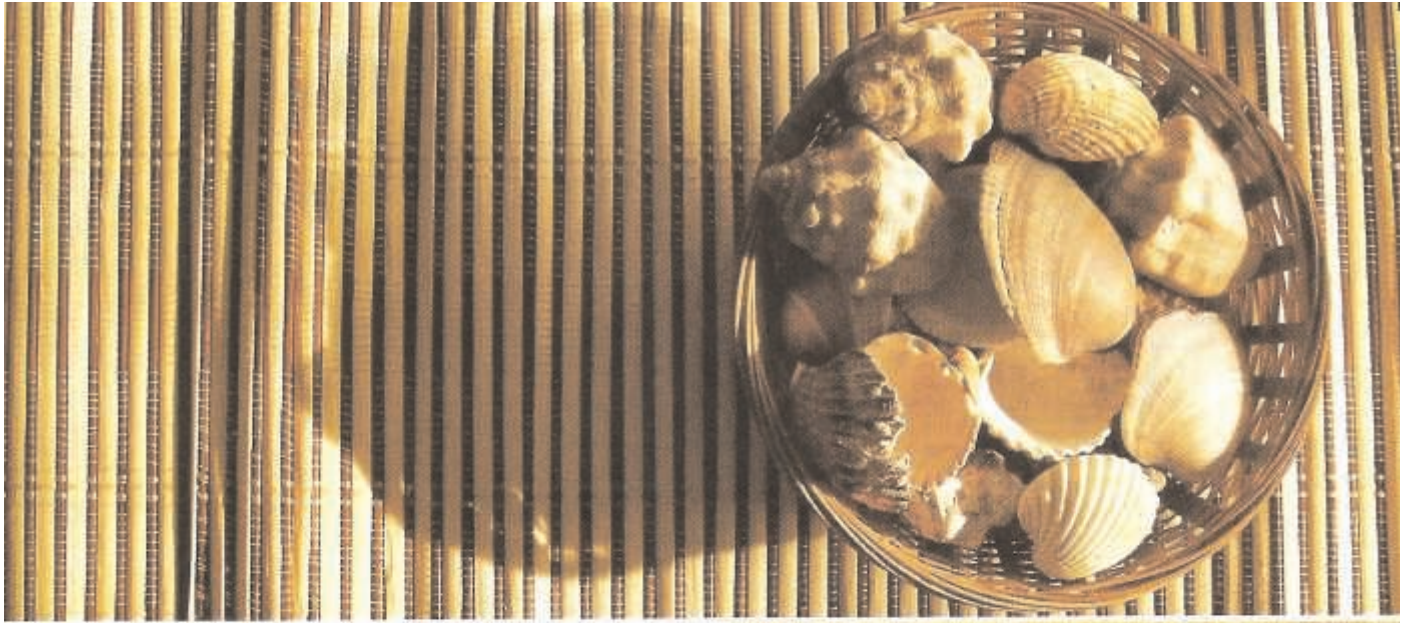


Stereotyped as only a handicraft material, the humble bamboo is basking in its re-found recognition as a top building and cladding material, reveals Minhazz Majumdar of The Bamboo Store.



If baskets or flutes are all that come to mind when you think of bamboo, think again! Now available in many new avatars, bamboo will amaze you by its versatility. With over 1,500 documented uses, bamboo is an extremely useful material and new usages are being discovered every day. A grass species with amazing properties, hence also called Miracle Grass, bamboo is amongst the fastest growing plants. As it can be used without too many preliminary processes such as removal of bark, branches, etc, and comes with a smooth natural covering, it is also named Wonder Lumber. In most bamboos, branches and leaves appear only at the node, and can be easily cut off. The stalk can be used in its natural form, its rounded shape and node walls enabling use as containers such as a mug, jug, box, etc. Another popular way of using bamboo is to split the culm (stalk) into thick slats, and join them to form large structures such as fences, walls, doors and windows or smaller products such as trays, trivets, bath-mats, pen-stands, etc. Additionally, bamboo can also be sliced into slivers, which can be woven to make mats or basketry products.



★ Minhazz Majumdar is co-founder, The Bamboo Store, New Delhi, India's first dedicated bamboo products studio

In recent times, bamboo has been lending itself to newer products ranging from bamboo clothing to charcoal. Industrial applications of bamboo in India have received a fillip with the establishment of a dedicated National Mission on Bamboo Applications (NMBA), which is assisting entrepreneurs to establish bamboo-based industries across

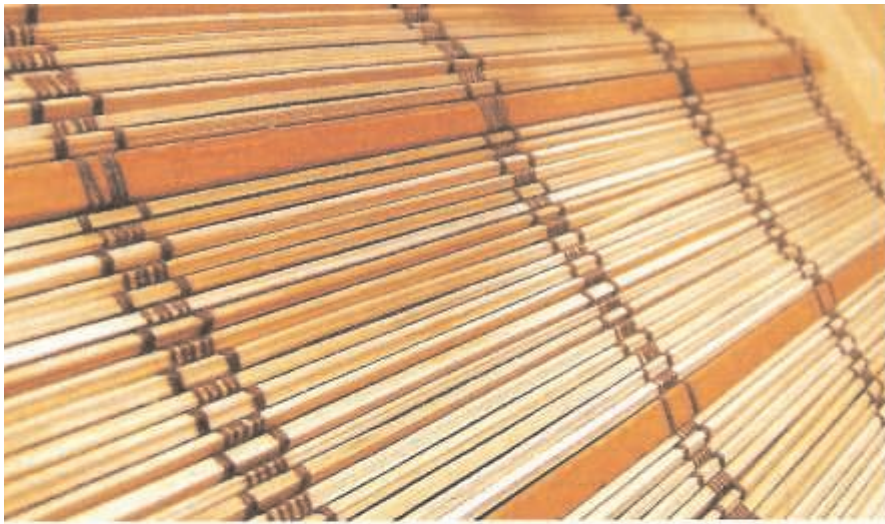


India. Since bamboo regenerates on its own, its products make for great ecological sense. As compared to most tree species which take 12 to 20 years to mature, bamboo is ready and available for harvesting in 3 to 5 years. Industrial bamboo products offer a viable alternative to wood and plastic in your home and workspace. Below are the new bamboo products currently available in India. Many other exciting products such as bamboo fibre-boards are on the anvil for large-scale commercialization.

### All on board!

A viable alternative to plywood, bamboo woven veneer board or mat-board is made from strips of bamboo that have been woven into mats, several of which are then glued together under pressure. Mat-boards are great for panelling walls and ceilings, as well as doors, furniture, and to create storage containers, etc. Extremely durable, bamboo mat-board comes treated with fire-retardant

- [1] Bamboo typically can be found in groves. There are also entire forests of bamboo
- [2] A basketful of sea shells on a woven bamboo-strip mat
- [3] Bamboo mat-board, made by glueing several layers of handwoven bamboo mats, is a great alternative to plywood. It can be used for partitions, cladding, false ceilings and storage containers



- 1] Chicks made from bamboo strips are held together by strong coloured yarn
- 1] Lattice screens of bamboo are ideal for screening-off porches. They are strong and hence good for securing premises, and they do not hamper light and ventilation. These lattices can also be used as vertical and horizontal support for climbing plants such as bougainvillea, 'money' plant, etc
- 1] Bamboo place-mats give a zen decor feel, and are easy to clean too!

chemicals and is highly resistant to insect and fungal attacks. These boards are visually pleasing, as typically the mats are woven with a herringbone pattern which creates a unique surface texture. Mat-board should ideally not be used outdoors — it is better for indoor applications. The bamboo mat-board industry provides employment, indirectly, to many village women who are engaged in weaving the mats at home. In this way, the mat-board industry, besides promoting ecological well-being, is also promoting rural employment. Estimates suggest that over 8,000 ha of natural forest could be saved from logging if one quarter of the country's plywood production is replaced by bamboo mat-board (International Network for Bamboo and Rattan [INBAR]).

### Up on the roof

Bamboo roofing is a great low-cost alternative to harmful asbestos roofing as well as an attractive option by itself. Bamboo-mat corrugated sheet roofing is very durable and has a much longer life-span than asbestos. Bamboo roofing is made of polymer-soaked-and-coated bamboo mats, which are then assembled and pressed under specified temperature and pressure to obtain sinusoidal (wave-like or curved), or other suitable corrugations. The mat slivers vary in thicknesses ranging 0.6 mm to 0.8 mm and have a minimum width of 5 mm.

### Floored!

Extremely strong and long-lasting, bamboo flooring is comparable to hardwood flooring in terms of durability. It is made by cutting bamboo into strips, and then laminating them



under pressure with glue. Depending on the orientation of the bamboo strips, this flooring can either have a horizontal or vertical grain. Bamboo flooring is easily installed — most have tongue-and-groove fittings, while some may require to be glued down. These floors can be easily installed on existing floors like any of the wood or wood-laminate flooring.

### Blind love

An exotic touch to any interior, bamboo blinds are made by weaving together thin or broad splits (or a combination) of bamboo in a continuous roll. Coloured threads can be used while weaving to create patterns, and the bamboo may even be dyed to create interesting colour combinations. Since blinds have a loose weave, they allow light and air to enter while affording privacy. Blinds can easily be manipulated and are a great way of screening spaces.

Environment-friendly, fast growing, multi-purpose, easy to maintain, bamboo is ready to rule the 21st century. 🌱

# Wiped Clean

Hardy bamboo needs nothing more than causal care. Here are seven simple pointers.

TEXT: MINHAZZ MAJUMDAR | PHOTOGRAPH: ALLISON CHOPPICK



Broad slats of bamboo strung together in a sheet format and being used as a roll-able room divider

Maintenance of bamboo is as easy as the material is to work with. Apart from a regular wipe-down, and a few nips and tucks periodically, your extremely durable bamboo furniture, furnishings and accessories will last a very long time. Once it begins to disintegrate, you can take the still strong portions and reuse them as something else!

- > Bamboo flooring can be swept and swabbed. Just make sure that the swab has been wrung well so that there is no excess moisture. Since the flooring is laminated, it does not scratch easily nor does it stain.
  - > Bamboo blinds can be dusted with a dry cloth or vacuum-cleaned. They can even be washed with water once in while as they will not shrink like fabric. Hold them under the shower for a few minutes or hose them down.
  - > Bamboo mat-board can be wiped with a wet cloth to remove dust and dirt.
  - > Smaller items like trays, boxes, bowls, etc, can even be given a quick wash under the tap.
  - > If you like your furniture and accessories to look spanking new all the time, all you need to do is apply a fresh coat of varnish every six months or so.
  - > Check for loose nails and bamboo-sliver binders that usually hold bamboo furniture joints together. Simply hammer the nails back in and tighten the strings.
  - > To avoid splitting/fraying of the base of the legs of furniture, protect them with plastic or wooden 'feet'. These are tiny blocks that are either glued on or nailed in.
- Keep your tool kit away, and bring in a bucket of water, a capful of disinfectant, an old t-shirt, a light hammer, water-proof workman gloves, and you are ready to brush up your bamboo! 🍵