

Woven Woods: Fashion-Forward & Eco Savvy

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By Christine Hanwick



Lutron® designer Roman shades powered by Sivoia QED® drive, woven woods collection, shown in Zenkon Caffè, created from bamboo and dyed bamboo.

As interior design continues to move toward green and organic—woven woods are at the forefront once again. Gone are the days of the cumbersome woven wood shades you might have seen in grandma’s porch—today’s woven woods are high-style and eco-friendly.

Trend: grass, exotic mixes, and color

In the past, even in the last few years, designers were still limited to simple combinations of bamboo and ramen wood. And although bamboo and woods are still popular, there is now a plethora of materials to choose from: grasses, reeds, bark, jute, ramen, flax, hemp...the list goes on.

While the selection is varied, several manufacturers find that grasses, exotic mixes, and color prevail as the latest trends in woven woods.

“We see greatest growth in the softer grass looks in woven woods, a move away from bamboo and woods. Designers too are looking for softer grass looks in woven woods,” says Mark D. Schneider, Hunter Douglas Designer Shades marketing manager.

B & W Director of Marketing Tom Perkowitz says, “We’ve seen an explosion in the use of more unique natural materials and more renewable woods like arakaria.”

“Color is definitely playing a big part in woven-wood trends. Customers are developing a preference for rich mahoganies and other darker colors,” says Megan Driskell, product manager of Kensington Window Expressions.

Rolling in the Green?

The popularity of woven woods with designers and consumers has increased sales and encouraged manufacturers to expand their woven-wood product lines—many of whom are also taking eco-awareness seriously, not only in their product lines, but in the workplace as well.

Perkowitz says, “While other window-fashions products have fallen victim to discounting, retailers who specialize in natural woven shades have been able to maintain their growth and profit margins.”

“Sales in the woven woods category have outperformed any other category,” says Ben Kutell, vice president of sales and marketing for Vertilux. Although Kutell says that the green trend in general has caused many people to ask for such materials, sales have not completely shifted to eco-friendly materials.

Vertilux, like many other window-fashions companies have taken environmentally responsible seriously. Kutell says, “Vertilux has implemented more recycling programs, as well as several other mechanisms to lower our overall demand for natural resources.”



Kathy Ireland Home By Alta Woven Woods in Kashmir Sable created from large wood reeds and warm yarn pattern with continuous loop system and edge binding.

B&W has also placed an emphasis on the environment. They hand craft many of its shades, and try to keep company waste to a minimum. Perkowitz says, “If we have a leftover piece of our Horizons™ Natural Shade patterns, we carefully measure and label it so that it can be used for another shade order.”

Are all Woven-Woods Created Eco?

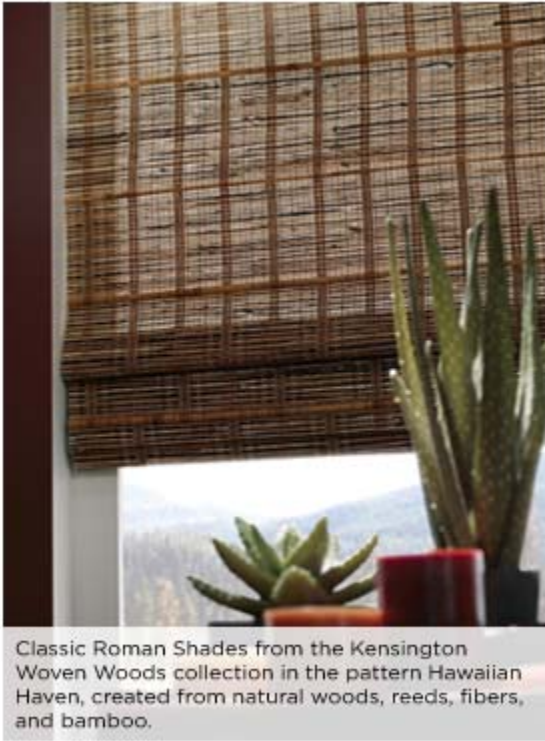
With so many options available, some green designers like Mary Catherine McCarthy, principal designer of MCM Design, are utilizing woven woods products because they can be an environmentally friendly choice.

As a green design firm, MCM Design receives quite a few requests from clients for natural materials. McCarthy says, “Woven-wood blinds offer a great variety of design elements to create a green environment.”

Claudia Juestel, founder and principal of Adeeni design group, has specified bamboo and grass/reed shades for many of her clients because “they are made from natural renewable materials that are abundant and fast-growing.”

But like many other products on the market today that claim to be green, Juestel says many woven-wood treatments are only partially green and recommends “contacting the manufacturer to ask how the shades have been finished and assembled.”

If your client is environmentally conscious, it is important to not only find out how they have been constructed, but where. Lili Wright, green design consultant and owner of Wright Design says, “In order for a product to truly be considered green, the wood should be coming from sustainable managed forests.”



Classic Roman Shades from the Kensington Woven Woods collection in the pattern Hawaiian Haven, created from natural woods, reeds, fibers, and bamboo.

Wright adds it is also important to look at such materials as the glues, which “should ideally be non-toxic and low VOC [volatile organic compounds].” In addition she says, “Some grasses are better than wood because grasses are a faster growing product, but depending upon where it is grown, the material can be resource intensive to import.”

In other words, you may choose a product made from a renewable resource, but it could leave a large carbon footprint (the total amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases emitted over the full life cycle of a product or service) to get to you.

Patricia Gaylor, Interior Designer and specialist in eco-friendly design and renovations says that sometimes you have to

make a choice: to use a renewable product that is burning carbon to get to you, or to choose a product that is not renewable or less green, manufactured closer to you.

Gaylor says, “There are all sorts of compromises to be made when it comes to green. But that’s ok; doing one thing towards a cleaner, greener, environment is a positive thing.”

Whether utilizing woven-woods for a client who wants the latest in window- fashions trends, or a eco-friendly product, the many faces of today’s woven woods change the mood from exotic to casual, formal, or rustic, with the ability to update any room— bathroom, office, bedroom...and yes, grandma’s porch.