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## **HISTORY OF CORK**

## **BENEFITS AND USE IN ZANDUR PRODUCTS**

**Z041**

Cork is the bark of the Cork Oak tree grown predominately in the Mediterranean area of Europe and North Africa. Since its first documented use in 3000 B.C., cork has continued to grow in use due to its unique combination of properties including its ability to insulate, its resilience and its buoyancy. Although used for thousands of years, the commercial development of cork began only in the 1800's when the Armstrong Cork Company developed its cork stopper, insulation and floor covering production in North America. Since then, cork has become a widely accepted interior product, a superior bottle closure and a high tech material used in automotive and aerospace industries. In fact, cork insulation was used on the initial space shuttles as an insulator due to its unique properties which could not be matched by any manmade materials.

Cork is harvested using methods that have remained virtually unchanged since cork was first discovered. Once the tree has reached a maturity of 25 years, the first "virgin" layer of cork bark is removed from the tree. The cork is removed by cutting the outer layer of bark and then gently peeling it from the tree at which time it is stacked in the forest and air dried for 3-6 months. Nine years after each harvest, the bark will again grow to a thickness of approximately 1-1/2" when it can again be harvested. Because the bark separates from the tree during the summer, it can be removed without causing any harm to the tree. To ensure that the tree can protect itself with its natural defenses, no more than 50% of the bark is removed during a harvest. While commercially managed, it is important to note that the Cork Oak is indigenous to the regions it is grown and therefore there is no requirement or need for chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Zandur Solid Cork and Cork-Rubber flooring products take advantage of the unique properties of cork. Our products are extremely comfortable and slip resistant while containing up to 100% recycled and renewable cork thereby reducing environmental impact. Additionally because cork is resilient, Zandur flooring is very durable as the surface "gives" under heavy traffic instead of wearing, thus significantly increasing the product life which can be well in excess of 30 years.

Zandur products are made using the waste developed during the manufacture of other cork products such as wine bottle stoppers. After stopper production, the waste is granulated and mixed into a rubber compound to produce cork rubber flooring. The coloring of the product is achieved by using light stable pigmentation added to the rubber. Upon completion of production, the tiles are hand sorted into lots to ensure product color and shade variance is within accepted standards for natural products. During the manufacturing process, all raw materials are used in the finished flooring product. All scrap and trimmings are either mixed into subsequent production runs or are used in the production of other products.

All Zandur products are designed to be environmentally safe, durable and naturally beautiful. Zandur sets the benchmark for product quality and consistency and ensures this through its strict quality control processes. For additional information on Zandur's products and environmental policies, please contact your local sales group or refer to Zandur's internet site at [www.zandur.com](http://www.zandur.com).