



Hot prospect

Thermally treated wood ready to set the decking market on fire

PUREWOOD DECKING from Bay Tree Technologies is offered in two profiles: traditional-style Sahara and Euro-style Linea.

THERMALLY modified wood is the latest entry in the U.S. decking marketplace. Unlike recently introduced alternatives, the product is real wood that is treated with heat or steam—but no chemicals or other additives.

“This industry has heard a lot of promises through the years: promises of a wood product that would truly be a viable alternative to composites and treated materials,” said Ron Long, president and c.e.o. of Bay Tree Technologies, Memphis, Tn. “We’re proud to introduce a safe, natural alternative with proven technology behind it.”

The thermal modification process was developed in Finland and has been used extensively in Europe since the mid-1990s. Using specially designed kilns, the wood is heated at high temperatures that reportedly improve dimensional stability, chemically transform sugars in the wood so they can’t be digested by insects or decay organisms, and produce uniform coloration. The result, say proponents, is natural wood that lasts longer and performs better.

Bay Tree is one of three companies that were formed to offer the product in the U.S. The other two are Cambia by Greenleaf, which operates in Kingston, N.H., and Westwood Timber Group, King of Prussia, Pa.

Bay Tree’s entry is called PureWood and includes two profiles: traditional-style Sahara and Euro-style Linea. Both are produced from

southern yellow pine in a new, 84,800-sq. ft. building owned and operated by Burke Garden Products in Terre Haute, In. A second plant in the Pacific Northwest will treat Douglas fir.

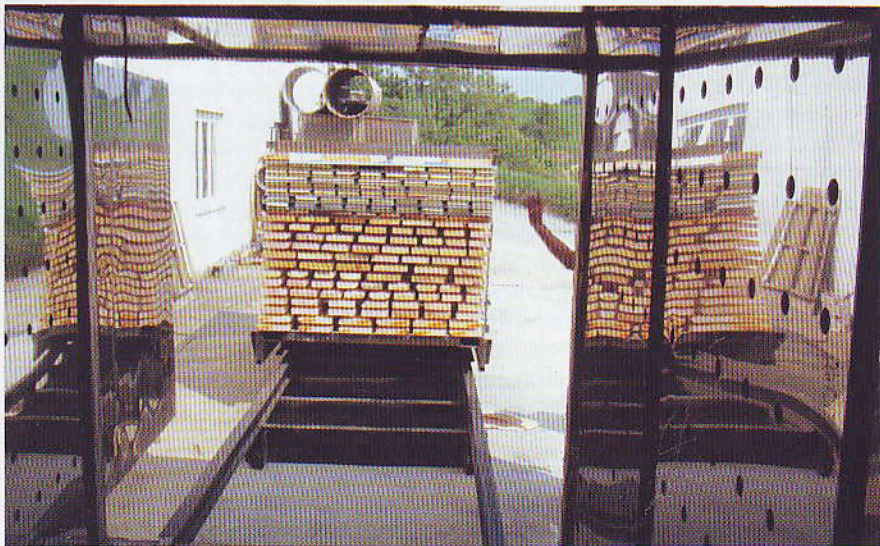
PureWood recently won a place in the GreenSpec Directory, one of the most respected resources in the green industry. “We developed this company and product to be environmentally responsible,” said Long. “This is a clear endorsement that PureWood meets those requirements.”

BuilderReady Products, Atlanta, Ga., will distribute the new decking in the Southeast. “There’s little doubt that PureWood decking will be well received by our customers,” said president Nick Hobbs. “It offers the per-

formance and simplicity that our dealers want and their clients are asking for. A real wood product with the performance of composite or chemically treated decking has been a long time coming.”

Cambia by Greenleaf is a joint venture formed by Northland Forest Products, Kingston, N.H., a leading supplier of FSC-certified hardwoods, and PCI Industries, Quebec, which brought thermal modification technology to Canada in 2003. Cambia’s first kiln is located at Northland’s facility in Kingston. As demand increases, more kilns will be added in Kingston and at Northland’s second facility in Troy, Va.

“Based on the number of homeowners who choose pressure treated



THERMAL KILN from by Westwood Timber is loaded with wood at Keim Lumber, Charm, Oh.

and imported hardwood decking, it's fair to say that homeowners prefer wood," said Gary Weinstein, who handles marketing for Cambia. "Thermally modified decking overcomes issues and concerns related to both."

On the green side, Cambia is made from domestic poplar that is sustainably grown on family-owned lands. However, the dark color resulting from thermal modification causes the product to be mistaken for exotic, imported hardwoods.

"Most homeowners would like to use green building products, but are generally unwilling to pay more," said Weinstein. "Cambia may be the first



CAMBIA DECKING is advertised as an environmentally responsible building material.

green building product that performs better and costs less than products developed to replace wood."

Keim Lumber, Charm, Oh., is the first in the U.S. to purchase and use Westwood Timber's Thermo-Treatment equipment. "The green aspect appealed to us because we can have treated wood that is chemical and metal free," said Noah Yoder, Keim's general manager.

He said that Keim's Thermo-Wood exhibit at the International Builders Show elicited lots of interest from attendees. So far, Keim has shipped the treated wood to a flooring manufacturer in California and a door manufacturer in Arizona. They've also shipped closer to home, in Pennsylvania.

As for the future, Keim hopes to install a second kiln when demand warrants. Westwood Timber hopes to sign on more manufacturers. "We're also planning to expand to the West next year," said Igor Danchenko, Westwood's president.

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