People + Planet

The Attainable, Sustainable Leather

Meet the leather-maker creating Steelcase's newest sustainable surface material

Read 3 minutes

It's no secret that originality is in. Uniqueness trumps uniformity, as we've come to embrace our imperfections as what makes us stand out. Of course, this affects all aspects of our lives, including the workplace.

"People are seeking authenticity. In contrast to trends driven by technology, we're seeing a rise in environmental consciousness, elevating recycled goods to luxury items," says Julie Yonehara, Steelcase surface materials designer.

Pairing the need for authenticity with our continued commitment to sustainability, Steelcase has discovered ways to offer unique pieces that are beautiful, ageless and earth-friendly. Scraps of unused fabric are being collected and rewoven into new textiles. Wood that was once cast aside because of knots and uneven grain is starring in one-of-a-kind pieces.

Now, leather has found a place in the lineup.

"Natural leather is the best storyteller. It's an ancient process that has given mankind the original sustainable performance material. Nothing else on earth is like it," says Daryl Calfee, vice president of marketing for Moore & Giles.

The Virginia-based leather company, founded in 1933 by Donald Graeme Moore, is Steelcase's newest leather surface materials partner. For over 85 years, the company has lived in service of its mission to enrich, inspire and provide for its customers, people and community.

"We believe in choosing well, not often. That alone is the most sustainable practice on the planet – using materials that get better with age and wear. Leather is that material," Calfee says.

For Moore & Giles, a partnership with Steelcase made sense, as both companies believe sustainability is about creating and supporting the economic, environmental and social conditions that allow people and communities to reach their full potential.

"We're seeing a rise in the awareness of how a product is brought to market. Where it comes from and how it's created. There's a desire for authenticity and our natural leathers showcase that so well. They feel honest and hard working," says Calfee.

Now available through Steelcase, Moore & Giles' 100 percent olive-leaf tanned leather, Terra, offers a window into the world of sustainable leather. Crafted in Spain in a variety of vivid colors, Moore & Giles tans the leather with the wet-green® process. This earth-friendly method is similar to brewing a pot of tea, using fallen leaves from olive trees.

After tanning, the hides undergo an open-air drying process and are finished with natural oils. The leather has a more natural aesthetic that showcases all of the inherent characteristics of the hides.

With over 110 employees, mainly in Lynchburg, VA, the team is focused on the same entrepreneurial, authentic spirit they were founded upon.

“Once you see, smell and touch our leather, it’s impossible to accept anything less,” says Calfee. “And the team at Moore & Giles is a joy to journey alongside.”

Explore the gallery to learn more about Steelcase’s other sustainable surface materials.