

As effective as a subtle fabric or as functional as a well-designed chair, it can be a Wow or a Whisper

Wows and Whispers

News & comment from THE SILK FOREST

This edition is a bit later than usual- sorry but during March we had to put all hands on deck including yours truly for the refit of Pullmantur Cruises' M/S Horizon, sailing under their brand Croisières de France.

Specified, designed, manufactured and shipped inside four weeks - another new record. Our Design Partner, Judi Robinson was working closely with the Interior Designer Glynis Ridout at Blackball. We'll have the story and pictures for the next edition.

(Not that it should make any difference but shortly thereafter, your Editor was admitted to hospital- nothing life-threatening but enough to need the attention of a specialist craftsman.)

Excuses over. Let's get down to the information.



*M/S Horizon, Croisières de France
©Pullmantur Cruises*

The drought's arrived!

We couldn't help but notice and the BBC News Channel made sure that everyone knew (probably because it affected the South-east of England) that some of us have a ban on using hosepipes. (Or, as some round our parts call it -a nosepipe ban.)

Maybe now is the time to think about what we were saying in March, done properly, good quality artificial foliage can do the job of making the place look nice AND cut down on the demand for water.

Let's remember that sometimes it can be just as green to use an artificial plant which consumes no precious water than real plants which do.

Exterior Foliage

There is another point to this. Just because foliage is plastic, doesn't make it suitable for use outside. At the risk of this sounding like we are stating the obvious, if something is going to be outside 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, it's going to meet some pretty fierce conditions: wind, rain and bright sunlight. Our customers who own ships, have all of this and contend with sea spray, as well.

There are some big differences between exterior artificial foliage and its interior relatives.

First is the part you don't see. Most artificial foliage has a wire support through it, to keep its shape. Indoors, the wind is not that strong but outside it can be gale force. This means that the supporting wire has to be strong enough to resist it. The wire in exterior grade foliage is a thicker, heavier gauge. This means that when the wind blows it can hold its shape, without shredding or being blown away.

The next big difference is the quality of the plastic coating. This is thicker and tougher than usual, not just to resist abrasion but to protect the wire support. If you bend plastic enough it eventually cracks or breaks- try it the next time that you get a replacement credit card. Instead of cutting it with scissors, just keep bending it back and forth as quick as you can. After a short while it will split and eventually break in two. The plastic on foliage has to withstand that kind of treatment not just to stay looking good but also to protect the wire from rusting.

THE SILK FOREST

Creators of Innovative Environments

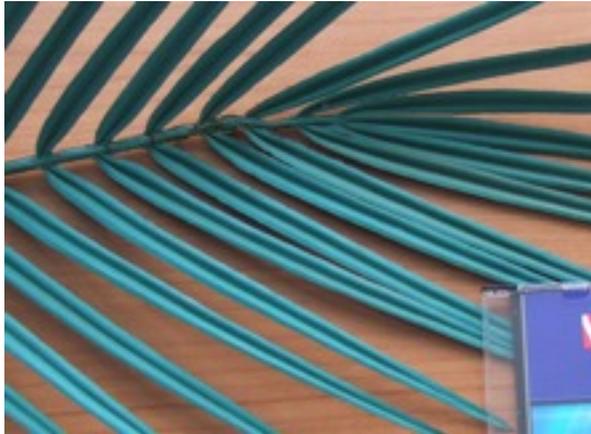
Main Street Bagworth Leicestershire LE67 1DN

T +44 (0) 1530 231 241

F+44 (0) 1530 231 240

E news@thesilkforest.com

The important difference in the plastic is probably the one nobody really talks about -because it's plastic, it doesn't mean it's OK to use outside. There's plastic and there's exterior quality plastic. If you look at a set of curtains, the parts which are exposed to the sunlight are a different colour to those facing into the room. That's the effect of the ultraviolet element in sunlight. This is commonly called "UV" The plastics in exterior grade foliage incorporate a chemical which protects against ultraviolet light. It's incorporated at the polymer stage, not added later, so it's part of the basic material.



uV faded foliage

You might ask 'so what?'

What it means is that if you don't use the right quality material, it will start to fade almost immediately. It will noticeably fade after 6 months and after that, the effects can be psychedelic. as the UV breaks down different dyes at different rates.

On the left is a picture of a piece of foliage which was supplied to us as exterior grade which we built into a tree. In 3 months, it had changed colour to this lovely shade of turquoise- it should be dark green. The picture hasn't been manipulated, just photographed in normal daylight, no flash, with the CD case there for comparison.

It doesn't have to be blue, it can be all sorts of colours. Just because it's in shade, under a canopy doesn't help: UV can pass through the fabric and it can still fade- or as we saw once, a lovely acid shade of orange .

Here's another example of the difference between UV inhibited and plain old plastic. On the face of it, both of these looked exactly the same when they were sold. Both exposed to the similar conditions in the UK, so we're not comparing Timbuktu and Manchester.

There is a spray which it's suggested makes foliage resistant to UV. All we can say is we haven't found it anywhere near as effective as inhibited foliage. It is cheaper and it may give you a few extra months but as it's usually applied interior grade foliage it still won't stand up to a howling gale. We're doing some controlled tests and we'll be reporting the results in due course.



Comparison of UV inhibited and non-UV inhibited foliage with similar environmental exposure

We've put our exterior grade into some of the toughest places. Apart from vandalism, we reckon it can withstand just about anything nature can throw at it -in one case a Force 11 gale. It's good for a minimum of two to three years and one of our installations is seven years old. If we do a review in 2013 it will probably be eight years! So remember:

In summary: Just because it's plastic doesn't make it exterior.

Colour is only part of the story- is it tough enough? If you can pull the leaves off, so can mother nature.

If the answer to your question "is it UV resistant" is "we've never had a problem" or as we heard once "Ooh that's very technical" find someone who knows what you're talking about

Yes, proper exterior grade is more expensive than ordinary plastic but we know it lasts more than twice as long- if not longer. So it's got to be better value for money.

Who wants to waste money? Bit of a no-brainer, isn't it?

Now here's a thought

Is The Society of Atheists a non-prophet organisation?

If there's someone you think would be interested in receiving this, for every valid contact you send us, we'll make a contribution to a registered charity of your choice.

If this is the first edition you have received from us and you simply can't bear the thought of what you may have missed, then mail us and we can send you back copies, quite few folks found the content useful.

Created and produced by
The Silk Forest Main Street Bagworth Leicestershire LE67 1DN

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