

59792 Cork Powder

Little studied, very light, porous, cellulose-like product formed under the epidermis of many plant parts (e.g., also in potato skin). Common natural cork comes from the cork oak (*Quercus suber*) commonly grown in Spain, Portugal and North Africa, which is peeled about every 10 years.

A microscopic section shows that the cells are all hollow (filled with air) on the inside. This causes the poor conductivity for sound and heat as well as the conspicuously low specific weight. The cork cell walls are only slightly permeable to gases and liquids due to the embedded suberin.

Good cork is light brown, dense and elastic. Cheaper grades are holey, mealy and harder. To soften older corks before use, pour cold water over them in a basket at half-hour intervals. In the laboratory, cork can be made soft and elastic with a cork press.

Cork is sealed against liquids by brushing with collodion solution or dipping in melted kerosene. The larger pieces of natural cork are used for the production of bottle corks, cork plates, floating belts, cones, bungs, shoe soles, heels etc. By far the most cork, however, is ground up and processed as cork meal or cork powder for fillings, for stuffing thermal insulation, or together with binders into linoleum or artificial cork (bath mats, soles, cork slabs, carpets, etc.).