

NEWSPAPER

A SUPPLEMENT TO

# floor covering news

## Retailers' Guide to Selling Hardwood Flooring

5<sup>th</sup> edition





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## hardwood basics

# The benefits    The options

There are many reasons consumers will gravitate toward the hardwood displays in a store, but it begins with aesthetics. Wood flooring enhances the décor of any room and provides timeless beauty that will increase in value over time. Other attributes include:

### Ease of maintenance

Maintenance of modern wood floors is fairly easy. New technology in stains and finishes call for regular cleaning that takes little more than sweeping and/or using a damp mop, with occasional use of a professional cleaning product. Make sure the consumer knows to use a cleaning product recommended by the manufacturer, installer or other wood flooring professional.

### Ecological

Wood floors are ecologically friendly. Because it is a natural resource, wood is both renewable and recyclable. Many of yesteryear's old wood ships, warehouses, barns and other structures often find a second life in wood flooring.

### Affordable

Today's wood floors are economical options. Over time, they maintain their value. When other flooring options are looking tired and worn out, wood will maintain its beauty and timelessness.

### Variety

There are more available styles, colors and species now than ever before. From traditional oak, rustic pine or exotic Wenge, there are options and designs to fit any décor.

Wood floors come in a variety of options to meet the demands of today's busy lifestyles: factory finished, unfinished, solid, engineered, strip, plank, parquet and acrylic impregnated. Helping a customer choose the style that best suits her needs will be based on numerous factors including family size, decorating preference and location.

### Colors

Wood floors come in a rainbow of colors to fit any décor. Unique, one-of-a-kind looks can be achieved with custom stains and finishes.

### Species

Today's wood floors come in more than 50 species—domestic and exotic—spanning the spectrum of colors, hardness and price ranges.

### Grades

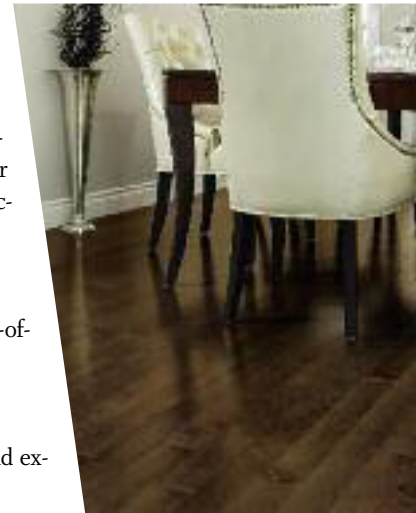
The appearance of the wood determines its grade. All grades are equally strong and serviceable, but each affords a different look:

- Clear wood is free of defects, though it may have minor imperfections.
- Select wood is almost clear but contains some natural characteristics such as knots and color variations.
- Common wood—No. 1 and No. 2—has more natural characteristics such as knots and color variations than either clear or select grades and is often chosen because of these natural features and the character they bring to a room. No. 1 Common has a variegated appearance, light and dark colors, knots, flags and wormholes. No. 2 Common is rustic in appearance and emphasizes all wood characteristics of the species.
- First grade wood has the best appearance, natural color variations and limited marks.
- Second grade wood is variegated in appearance with varying sound wood characteristics of species.
- Third grade wood is rustic in appearance illustrating all characteristics of the species.

### Cuts

The angle at which a board is cut determines how the finished product looks. Wood flooring is either plainsawn, quartersawn or riftsawn.

- Plainsawn is the most common cut. The board contains more variation than the other two cuts because grain patterns resulting from the growth rings are more obvious.
- Quartersawn produces less board feet per log than plainsawn and is therefore more expensive. Quartersawn wood twists and cups less and wears more evenly.
- Riftsawn is similar to quartersawing but the cut is made at a slightly different angle.



## The styles

There are three styles of wood floors available on the market today: strip, plank and parquet. Each is offered in a variety of species, colors and widths, so choosing the right style is simply a matter of which look the customer prefers.



Strip



Plank



Parquet

is generally considered "traditional" wood flooring.

2. Plank flooring typically ranges from 3 to 7 inches wide. While plank flooring is linear, like strip flooring, its wider widths often create a more casual look.

1. Strip flooring ranges from 1½ to 3 inches wide and creates a linear effect in a space, often making the area appear larger. Strip flooring

3. Parquet flooring can vary in size and usually generates a geometric, non-linear look. Parquet has the ability to be either very simple in design or somewhat complex.



## hardwood basics



**Solid hardwood**



**Engineered hardwood**

## Construction: Solid vs. engineered

There are two types of hardwood floors: solid and engineered. Both are comprised of 100% real wood, both are offered with a factory finish or can be finished on the jobsite, and both can be refinished. But that's where the similarities end.

### Solid wood

When a manufacturer references solid flooring, it is referring to a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick piece of solid wood. Although solid floors are available with a factory finish, they can also be finished on the jobsite. In addition, they may be installed on or above grade, but not on a slab. The wood is generally nailed to a plywood

subfloor.

One thing to keep in mind: Solid floors may not perform well in areas of high humidity or areas with significant temperature changes. Because solid flooring is a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch thick section of a tree, it responds to water and moisture as it would in nature. If the air is hot and humid, the floor will soak up that moisture, causing it to swell.

When the air dries out, the floor will shrink, leaving gaps between the boards. The wider the boards, the bigger the gaps and the more likely it will cup, so most solid wood floors are either  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches or  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide.

**Continued on page 44**

## OVERVIEW

### All you need to know about selling hardwood

Eight years ago, *Floor Covering News* published its first *Retailers' Guide to Selling Hardwood Flooring* as a way to train retailers and their salespeople on the basics of hardwood flooring along with tips on how to sell, merchandise and market the product. Immediately, we received requests for additional copies from retailers and distributors—even a home center requested copies for every one of its stores. This overwhelming response led us to publish a second edition two years later, a third in 2011, a fourth in 2013 and now we are proud to publish this much anticipated fifth edition.

This updated guide again aims to help the retailer and salesperson sell the proper floors for their customers' lifestyles. That's why

you'll not only find information on issues like solid vs. engineered hardwood and different installation methods, but you'll also see a guide to wood's many species as well as their hardness ratings as determined by the Janka scale. While the basics remain the same, this edition also features new articles on selling, merchandising, trends and more.

We have again enlisted the help of our sponsors to provide information on their respective companies as well as educational material designed to help retailers develop a profitable wood flooring business. These submissions also guide salespeople in how they can convey to customers the features and benefits of owning wood floors.

A SUPPLEMENT TO

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## hardwood basics

# The finishes

**W**hen choosing the right type of finish for a hardwood floor, a customer's lifestyle and maintenance preferences must be considered. All wood floors will require routine maintenance, such as sweeping or dust mopping, to keep them looking attractive and new, but different finishes will have a significant impact on how floors are cared for long-term, as well as how they will look in the years to come.

Surface finishes are very popular because they are durable, water resistant and require minimal maintenance. They remain on the surface of the wood to form a protective coating. Surface finishes are blends of synthetic resins and are often referred to as urethanes or polyurethanes. There are several types of surface finishes from which to choose:

- 1. Water-based finishes** appear clear and will resist turning yellow over time. They dry in two to three hours and are very durable.
- 2. Oil-based finishes** appear amber in color. They dry in about eight hours and are exceptionally durable.
- 3. Acid-cured finishes** appear clear to slightly amber. They dry in about two to three hours and are extremely durable.
- 4. Moisture-cured finishes** appear clear to amber. They will dry in about two to three hours in humid conditions. They are more moisture resistant than other surface finishes.
- 5. Wax finishes** soak into the pores of the wood and harden to form a protective penetrating seal, which will appear low luster and amber in color. They will dry in a variable amount of time depending on the type of wax used and the jobsite's conditions. Wax finishes are durable but will show spots from water and other contaminants.
- 6. Acrylic impregnated finishes** are injected into the wood to create a super hard, exceedingly durable floor. They are rarely used in residential applications; rather, acrylic impregnated finishes are often used in very high-traffic areas and commercial settings.

Finishes impact the long term maintenance and appearance of hardwood.

## hardwood 101: finishes

### The benefits of hard-wax oil

BY JOSE ALONSO

Brand strategist, DuChâteau

**S**ometimes breaking from tradition means embracing an entirely different custom in a novel way. Despite the American market's strong affinity for polyurethane-finished floors, hard-wax oiled floors have been the standard in Europe for centuries. By bringing European-inspired floors to customers stateside, the design community has been abuzz with excitement at the possibilities that come with hard-wax oiled hardwood.

In Europe, the floors in public spaces consist of hard-wax oiled wood that was installed 30 to 50 years ago. A well-maintained oiled floor only gets better with age—the ultimate color of the floor becoming even more distinct in that time.

Hard-wax oil is made from all-natural ingredients, including linseed oil, tung oil, sunflower oil, jojoba oil, beeswax, carnauba wax, candelilla wax, resins and colloidal clay. These natural oils penetrate deep into the wood fibers to protect from within, while the moisture-repelling waxes remain on the surface to create an

appealing matte finish and protective layer. Extremely water and stain resistant against wine, soda and coffee, hard-wax oil not only nourishes and protects the wood but also preserves its natural look and feel, which are sometimes lost in the higher luster of polyurethane finishes.



Natural ingredients in hard-wax oiled floors nourish and protect the wood.

Repairs on a hard-wax oiled floor are quite simple with minimal maintenance required. Spots and scratches can be minimized and often eliminated with buffing and a small application of the same oil. It is often recommended to reapply at least once a year or as needed to keep the floor performing as it should. Thankfully, the process is easy enough to do without the need for a professional service or expensive equipment. With proper care, a hard-wax oil floor will not need to

be professionally sanded either.

In comparison, polyurethane and lacquer finishes commonly used today create a thick film on the surface of the wood. Though extremely durable, repairs can be difficult because these finishes do not bond chemically to previous layers and grip only where the surface has been thoroughly abraded. These floors typically need to be sanded down and refinished.



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## hardwood basics

# The grades

**G**rade and quality are two separate measures that when combined will help determine a product's value. Grade can be best described as the visual of natural wood. It is evaluated along a wide spectrum that ranges from very uniform in appearance—without knots or other standout qualities—to significant color variations, short lengths, open knots, streaks, shake, worm holes, wane and other woodworker-specific characteristics used to describe wood's natural features.

Quality, on the other hand, is manufacturing related. So while grade is what the tree gave you to work with, how that natural wood is manufactured to create the final planks plays another key role in the overall value of the flooring. For instance, a high-grade wood may have manufacturing defects, which would lower the flooring's quality and overall value. Conversely, a low-grade wood may have little to no manufacturing defects, which would increase its quality and thus raise its

value. For this very reason, product warranties are almost always tied to quality and are less dependent on a wood's grade.

The following table lists grades, along with a brief description of the characteristics and allowable defects found within each category. Unless specified, the allowable defects listed are considered part of the industry's standard 5% waste factor allowed for all better wood flooring grades (this can be as much as 15% to 20% for low grades).

Prefinished wood grades	Unfinished wood grades	Wood characteristics	Allowable defects
Prime/A Grade/Clear Grade	Clear Grade/1st Grade/ Select and better	These boards represent the top grade within each wood species. Woods are cut from the center of the log and have a highly uniform appearance with few knots. The sap content of this wood is low, and color variations are minimal. After finishing, the face of the boards will have the "cleanest" appearance of that species.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natural color variations</li> <li>Off-color streaks 6 inches in length or the equivalent</li> <li>Occasional small burls; very small, tight knots, and fine pinworm holes</li> <li>No pieces with less than a ¾ inch full tongue</li> <li>Includes boards with the longest plank lengths</li> </ul>
Standard/B Grade/Select/ #1 Common and better	Select/2nd Grade/ No. 1 Common/ Common and better	While the face of these boards contains more wood characteristics relevant to the species, the face is still even and smooth after filling and finishing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small worm holes</li> <li>Season and kiln checks</li> <li>Dime-size broken knots</li> <li>Larger open knots, if properly filled and finished</li> <li>Other limited small unfinished/unfilled open characteristics</li> <li>Minor imperfections from machining</li> <li>Some sapwood, torn grains and burns</li> </ul>
#2 Common/C Grade/Builder/ Mill Run/Character/Rustic/ Sapwood/Natural/Shorts	#2 Common/C Grade/Builder/ Mill Run/Character/Rustic/ Sapwood/Natural/Shorts	Boards within these grades include most of the wood's spectrum of natural character. Woods include more color, bigger knots and creamy-colored sapwood. A limited amount of unfilled or unfinished open characteristics on the face are also allowed. Also expect to find overall shorter pieces.	Allowable defects include a limited amount of pieces with some finish irregularities, including bubbles, small skips, lines, stain or color variations, surface handling scratches, minor trash issues.
Cabin/Tavern (no structural warranty)	Cabin/Tavern (no structural warranty)	This grade may include some low-grade wood characteristics and quality imperfections such as machining issues. For the most part, this grade has shorter board lengths, more color variations and small dings, and is thus expected to have more than a 10% waste factor. Because quality defects are allowed, there is no structural warranty offered on this wood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small amount of unfilled knots</li> <li>Small finish defects such as skips, color variations, scratches and bubbles</li> </ul>
#3 Common/D Grade/Utility (no structural warranty)	#3 Common/D Grade/Utility (no structural warranty)	This grade has the shortest board lengths and includes most wood imperfections and machining issues. It is expected to have more than a 10% waste factor.	Most wood imperfections and machining issues
Shop (no warranty)	Shop (no warranty)	This grade can be a great value; however, expect more labor and waste.	All imperfections

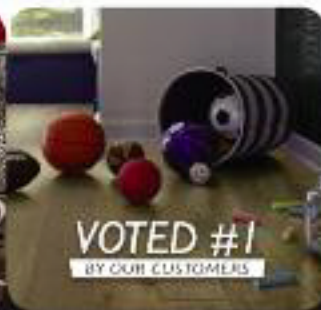
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## glossary

**Above grade** Any surface that is above the level of the surrounding ground.

**Acrylic impregnated** Acrylic monomers are injected into the cell structure of the wood to increase its hardness then finished with a wear layer over the wood.

**Acrylic urethane** A slightly different chemical composition than polyurethane with similar benefits.

**Aluminum oxide** Added to the wear layer of a urethane finish for increased abrasion resistance; popular on better grade wood floors.

**Below grade** Any surface that is below the level of the surrounding ground.

**Better** A quality of wood that has small knots and light dark graining.

**Beveled edge** Hardwood boards with a distinctive groove in them, as seen in informal and country decor. With today's urethane finishes, these edges can be completely sealed, making these floors easy to clean.

**Buckle** When humidity is high, wood expands and gaps disappear. In situations of too much moisture, the wood may cup or "buckle."

**Clear** An expensive quality of wood that has no visual blemishes or knots.

**Cross-ply construction** A technique in which wood plies are stacked on top of each other in opposing directions. The result is a wood floor that is dimensionally stable and less affected by moisture.

**Cupping** Warping with a concave condition in which the center is lower than the sides.

**Eased edge** Also known as a micro-beveled edge, some manufacturers add this slightly beveled edge to both the length and end joints of their hardwood planks.

**Finish in place** Unfinished hardwood floors that are installed, sanded and finished with an application of two to three coats of urethane on site.

**Floating floor** With this method, hardwood floors are not mechanically fastened to any part of the subfloor. Instead, a thin pad is placed between the wood and the subfloor and a recommended glue is applied in the tongue and groove of each plank.

**Glue down** The process in which a hardwood floor is adhered to a subfloor using a recommended adhesive, spread on with the proper sized trowel.

**Graining** Texture seen in a cut surface of wood.

**Janka hardness test** The standard test for determining a wood's hardness rating in which the force required to embed a .444-inch steel ball to half its diameter in a piece of wood is measured. A higher rating translates to a harder wood.

**Knot** The round, harder, typically darker cross section of a piece of wood where a branch once joined the tree trunk.

**Longstrip plank** Similar to engineered floors in that multiple layers or plies are glued together on top of a center core that is typically a softer wood material also used to make the tongue and groove. The result is a board that appears to be three rows wide and several planks long.

## hardwood 101: construction

### Creating a better, quality veneer

BY SYLVIA BULANEK

Marketing manager, Hallmark Floors

**W**ith an improved economy and a pent-up demand for flooring, hardwood is becoming an increasingly popular choice. In a more active home buying market, homeowners have the opportunity to make more money in a sale when hardwood is installed in their homes.

There are three major ways to make veneers for engineered wood floors: sawn-cut face, slice-cut face and rotary-cut face. Veneer is sliced directly from the log or lumber, and the way it is cut/sliced determines the quality, surface, pattern and stability for the floors. In addition, how the wood is processed before it is cut/sliced/rotary peeled also plays a factor in its quality. Proper handling or preparation of the logs before they are cut will create a better, quality veneer.

**Sawn-cut face:** Experts in the industry agree that sawn-cut veneer provides the best quality and stability for engineered floors. Sawn-cut allows for the thickest veneer (4mm) with the highest degree of stability, which gives solid hardwood flooring visuals. It is made by tilting the log to a slight angle so the slices are more perpendicular to the growth rings. This process creates

a beautiful wood grain and higher quality product, which is unique to sawn-cut face engineered floors.

**Slice-cut face:** Sliced-cut (or flat cut) veneer is the second most common way to create a wood veneer and is better than the traditional rotary-cut. There are two ways to create sliced-cut veneers.

The difference is the direction of the knife when cutting the log. In the common method, the log is repeatedly sliced parallel to the center. It's the same way most boards are cut, just in much thinner layers (2mm or less). However, according to the experts, to produce a better slice-cut face veneer, the log should be cut from the top down, creating less stress on the veneer during the slicing process. This new progressive process was developed for the sole purpose of increasing one thing: stability.

**Rotary-cut face:** Traditional rotary-cut face allows for a thinner (2.5mm or less), more efficient cut. Spinning the log and peeling off a continuous sheet creates this veneer (think of a roll of paper towels). Rotary-cut top layers accentuate the natural grain pattern and have a more pronounced grain appearance.





**Moisture-cured urethane** A chemical similar to solvent-based urethane, but requires humidity or moisture to cure.

**Moldings** Devices used to cover expansion joints that enhance the performance and appearance of a hardwood floor.

**Nail-down floor** Nailing cleats are used with a wood flooring nailer and a mallet to attach hardwood flooring to a subfloor. This method of installation is typically used with ¾-inch solid products, although adapters exist for thinner floors.

**No. 1 Common** A quality of wood that has some knots and some dark graining.

**No. 2 Common** A quality of wood that has even more knots and dark graining.

**Ongrade** At ground level.

**Polyurethane** A clear, durable finish applied as a wear layer over hardwood floors.

**Prefinished wood** Hardwood flooring that comes sanded, stained and finished at the manufacturing plant, ready for installation in a home. These products typically provide a harder, better-protected surface because several coats of urethane are applied and UV dried. They come in a wider variety of wood species and save hours of labor and clean up.

**Rotary cut** A hardwood cutting process that displays a larger and bolder graining pattern.

**Select** A quality of wood that has some small knots but very little dark graining.

**Sliced cut** A hardwood cutting process that shows a more uniform pattern.

**Solid** A piece of wood that has tongue and groove sides. It can come unfinished or prefinished and is sensitive to moisture.

**Solvent-based urethane oil** Used as part of the chemical composition of a polyurethane finish.

**Square edge** When the edges of all hardwood boards meet squarely to create a uniform, smooth surface that blends the floor together from strip to strip or plank to plank.

**Staple-down floor** A method of hardwood installation in which staples are used to attach the wood to the subfloor. A pneumatic gun is often used.

**Strip** A classic hardwood floor with narrow board widths. Most common species are red oak, white oak, maple, cherry, white ash, hickory and pecan.

**Tongue and groove** The joining of two hardwood boards, one having a tongue on its edge that fits into the groove in the edge of the other.

**Unfinished** Not prefinished in a factory. It allows homeowners to customize their floors and finish them on site by sanding or staining.

**UV cured** Hardwood finishes cured in a factory with Ultra Violet (UV) lights vs. heat or moisture.

**Water-based urethane** A polyurethane finish that includes water in its chemical composition, dries clear and is non-yellowing.

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MP GLOBAL

# Insulayment: High-performing underlayment for wood floors

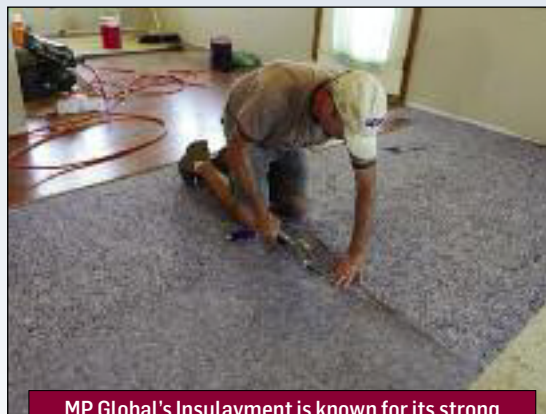
MP Global Products, a leading manufacturer of underlayments, offers Insulayment, an eco-friendly, high-performing fiber acoustic underlayment engineered specifically for glue-down and nail-down hardwood and engineered wood floors. It offers many notable benefits and, therefore, is a smart choice for homeowners, builders and developers concerned with the quality and performance of the overall floor assembly.

Insulayment is an exceptional acoustic underlayment with strong sound absorption capabilities that would be appreciated in single-family homes and multi-family housing. Featuring randomly air-laid fibers that cushion the floor and create a capillary effect, Insulayment is designed to dampen impact noise and decrease airborne sounds from traveling to the room below.

In field testing for sound performance, Insulayment earned a Field Impact Insulation (F-IIC) rating of 60 when tested under ¾-inch glue down engineered wood over 8-inch concrete with no ceiling assembly, an Impact Insulation

Class (IIC) rating of 52 and a Sound Transmission Class (STC) rating of 53.

The IIC rating is a widely accepted test for evaluating an assembly for sound that travels



MP Global's Insulayment is known for its strong sound absorption capabilities.

from one living area down to another and measures the ability of a particular floor/ceiling assembly to block impact sound by measuring the resistance of impact noise or structure-borne

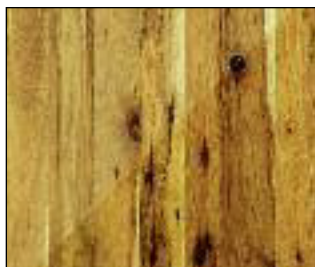
noise. As the International Building Code (IBC) minimum standards for multi-family dwellings for new construction (tested in a controlled laboratory environment) and condo and high rise associations typically require an IIC rating of 50, Insulayment is a good choice for installations aiming to meet or beat those numbers.

Here's a feature attractive to environmentally minded customers: Insulayment is third-party certified by SCS Global Services that the underlayment is made from 100% pre-consumer recycled textile content. Manufactured in America from locally sourced material—eliminating overseas shipping and minimizing transportation costs—it is LEED compliant and will contribute to MRC4.1-4.2 credits.

Insulayment is warranted for 15 years to suppress the transfer of lateral cracking of up to ¼-inch from concrete subfloors to the covered flooring material. The .11-inch thickness of Insulayment helps smooth out little subfloor imperfections and the air-laid filaments resist compression.



# Exotic hardwood species



## AUSTRALIAN CYPRESS

**Origin:** Australia

**Color:** Cream-colored sapwood; heartwood is honey-gold to brown with darker knots throughout

**Grain:** Closed



## BRAZILIAN CHERRY

**Origin:** Brazil

**Color:** Sapwood is gray-white; heartwood is salmon red to orange-brown when fresh and becomes russet or reddish-brown when seasoned; often marked with dark streaks

**Grain:** Mostly interlocked; texture is medium to rather coarse



## BRAZILIAN MAPLE

**Origin:** Brazil

**Color:** Pale cream to yellow cream; no contrast between sapwood and heartwood

**Grain:** Straight, fine, uniform

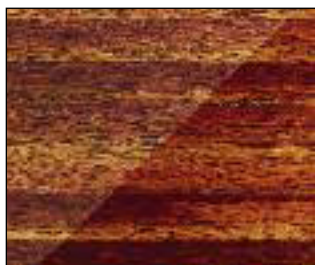


## BRAZILIAN WALNUT

**Origin:** Brazil

**Color:** Can vary from light, yellowish tan with green overtones to almost blackish-brown; exhibits a large range of coloration when freshly milled; darkens over time to medium to dark brown

**Grain:** Fine to medium, straight to very irregular



## BUBINGA

**Origin:** Africa

**Color:** Pink, red or red/brown with purple streaks or veins; changes from pinkish-rose when freshly milled to burgundy red when aged

**Grain:** Fine; straight or interlocked, can be highly figured



## CUMARU

**Origin:** South America

**Color:** At first, red-brown or purple-brown with light yellow-brown or purple streaks, after exposure uniform light brown or yellow-brown

**Grain:** Fine texture, interlocked, waxy or oily feel



## JARRAH

**Origin:** Australia

**Color:** Heartwood is uniformly pinkish to dark red, often a rich, dark red mahogany hue, turning a deep brownish-red with age and exposure. Frequent black streaks with occasional ingrown grain

**Grain:** Frequently interlocked or wavy. Texture is even and moderately coarse

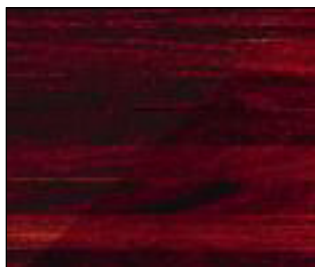


## MERBAU

**Origin:** Southeast Asia

**Color:** Heartwood is yellowish to orange-brown when freshly cut, turning brown or dark red-brown upon exposure

**Grain:** Straight to interlocked or wavy; coarse texture

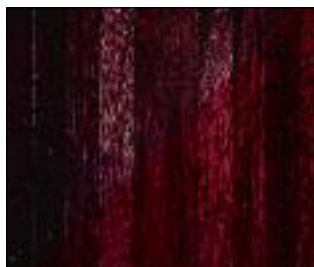


## PADAUK

**Origin:** Africa

**Color:** Heartwood is vivid, reddish orange when freshly cut, darkening to reddish- or purple-brown or black over time; very uniform in color

**Grain:** Straight to interlocked; coarse texture



## PURPLEHEART

**Origin:** Mexico, Central and South America

**Color:** Heartwood is brown when freshly cut, turning deep purple to purplish-brown over time

**Grain:** Usually straight; medium to fine texture. Presence of minerals in some boards may cause uneven coloration



## SANTOS MAHOGANY

**Origin:** South America

**Color:** Dark reddish-brown

**Grain:** Striped figuring in quartersawn selections; texture is even and very fine



## SAPELE

**Origin:** Africa

**Color:** Medium to dark red-brown; darkens over time

**Grain:** Fine, interlocked



## SPOTTED GUM

**Origin:** Australia

**Color:** Heartwood is light to dark brown, sapwood is pale and may be as wide as 3 inches

**Grain:** Interlocked, moderately coarse. Frequent presence of wavy grain produces "fiddleback" grain. Slightly greasy; gum veins are common



## TASMANIAN OAK

**Origin:** Australia

**Color:** Pale straw with occasional pinkish highlights, tan colors, some medium gray/brown colors; over time overall color variation is muted with an ambering of the straw colors to darker tan

**Grain:** All riftsawn

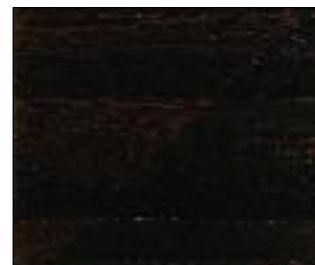


## TEAK

**Origin:** Asia

**Color:** Heartwood varies from yellow-brown to dark golden brown; turns rich brown under exposure to sunlight. Sapwood is a lighter cream color

**Grain:** Straight; coarse, uneven texture



## WENGE

**Origin:** Africa

**Color:** Heartwood is yellow-brown when freshly cut, turning dark brown to almost black with alternate layers of light and dark. Sapwood is yellowish-white and clearly demarcated from heartwood

**Grain:** Straight when quartersawn; coarse texture

# Domestic hardwood species



## AMERICAN CHERRY

**Color:** Heartwood is light to dark reddish-brown, lustrous; sapwood is light brown to pale with a light pinkish tone. Color darkens

**Grain:** Fine, frequently wavy, uniform texture. Distinctive flake pattern on true quartersawn surfaces. Texture is satiny, with some gum pockets



## ASH

**Color:** Heartwood is light tan to dark brown; sapwood is creamy white. Similar in appearance to white oak, but frequently more yellow

**Grain:** Bold, straight, moderately open grain with occasional wavy figuring. Can have strong contrast in grain in plainsawn boards



## BEECH

**Color:** Heartwood is mostly reddish-brown; sapwood is generally pale white

**Grain:** Mostly closed, straight grain; fine, uniform texture. Coarser than European beech



## BIRCH

**Color:** Sapwood is creamy yellow pale white heartwood is light reddish-brown tinged with red. In sweet birch (*B. lenta*), sapwood is light colored and heartwood is dark brown tinged with red

**Grain:** Medium figuring, straight, closed grain, even texture. Occasional curly grain or wavy figure in some boards



## BLACK WALNUT

**Color:** Heartwood ranges from a deep, rich dark brown to a purplish-black. Sapwood is nearly white to tan

**Grain:** Mostly straight and open, but some boards have burl or curly grain. Arrangements of pores is similar to hickories and persimmon, but pores are smaller in size



## DOUGLAS FIR

**Color:** Heartwood is yellowish-tan to light brown. Sapwood is tan to white. Heartwood may be confused with that of Southern yellow pine. Radical color change upon exposure to sunlight

**Grain:** Normally straight, with occasional wavy or spiral texture. Nearly all fir flooring is vertical-grain or riftsawn clear-grade material



## HEART PINE

**Color:** Heartwood is yellow after cutting and turns deep pinkish-tan to warm reddish-brown within weeks due to high resin content. Sapwood remains yellow, with occasional blue-black sap stain

**Grain:** Dense, with high figuring. Plainsawn is swirled; rift- or quartersawn is primarily pinstriped. Curly or burl grain is rare



## HICKORY/PECAN

**Color:** Pecan heartwood is reddish-brown with dark brown stripes; sapwood is white or creamy white with pinkish tones. Hickory heartwood is tan or reddish; sapwood is white to cream, with fine brown lines

**Grain:** Pecan is open, occasionally wavy or irregular. Hickory is closed, with moderate definition; somewhat rough-textured



## HARD MAPLE

**Color:** Heartwood is creamy white to light reddish-brown; sapwood is pale to creamy white

**Grain:** Closed, subdued grain, with medium figuring and uniform texture. Can show quilted, fiddleback, curly or bird's-eye figuring. Figured boards often culled during grading and sold at a premium



## MESQUITE

**Color:** Light brown to dark reddish-brown

**Grain:** High in character, with ingrown bark and mineral streaks. Most commonly used in flooring as end-grain block, which has small irregular cracks radiating across the grain



## RED OAK

**Color:** Heartwood and sapwood are similar, with sapwood lighter in color; most pieces have a reddish tone

**Grain:** Open, slightly coarser (more porous) than white oak. Plainsawn boards have a plumed or flared grain appearance; riftsawn has a tighter grain pattern, low figuring; quartersawn has a flake pattern



## SOUTHERN YELLOW PINE

**Color:** Heartwood varies from light yellow/orange to reddish-brown or yellowish-brown; sapwood is light tan to yellowish-white

**Grain:** Closed, with high figuring; patterns range from clear to knotty



## WHITE OAK

**Color:** Heartwood is light brown; some boards may have a pinkish tint or a slight grayish cast. Sapwood is white to cream.

**Grain:** Open, with longer rays than red oak. Occasional crotches, swirls and burls. Plainsawn boards have plumed or flared grain; riftsawn has a tighter grain pattern, low figuring; quartersawn has a flake pattern.

## Use of domestic exotics on the rise

The use of non-traditional North American wood species—generally referred to as domestic exotics—has risen dramatically over the last five years. There are numerous reasons as to why.

*The environment:* From the U.S. revising its 100-year-old Lacey Act and other countries strengthening their own laws concerning illegal logging to consumers becoming more conscious and knowledgeable about sustainability issues, all corners of the industry have growing environmental concerns.

*The economy:* The decline in the economy from 2006 to 2012 also eroded demand for foreign exotics. People continue to want hardwood floors, and they are willing to spend more money so they can achieve the look of domestic exotic wood.

*Trends:* The popularity of domestic exotics began in the fine furniture and cabinetry industries. As different exotic woods became more popular in home furnishings, the demand rose for flooring with similar looks.

*Engineered wood:* Architects and designers have been using wider planks for most projects. Because of their stability, engineered products are often the preferred choice.



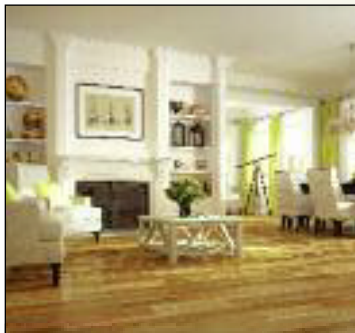
## hardwood 101: species

### Getting out of the red oak rut

BY WADE **BONDROWSKI**

Director of sales, Mercier Wood Flooring

Isn't it tiresome to sell tons of red oak? And more red oak? Although this is a common sentiment amongst retailers, they continue to sell it. And then they complain about the quality, stating that it is average at best and margins continue to erode. The complaint often heard is, "I can't make money in the hardwood business selling red oak." The solution? Sell a better quality red oak product and quantify it, or



Species like this hickory are in vogue and offer retailers a viable alternative to red oak.

better yet, how about getting out of the red oak species altogether? Yes, there are alternatives.

Oftentimes the consumer asks for oak because that is all she knows about hardwood floors. But today's shopper would like to be more educated and doesn't necessarily want her mother's

floor; therefore it is important to talk to her about available alternatives.

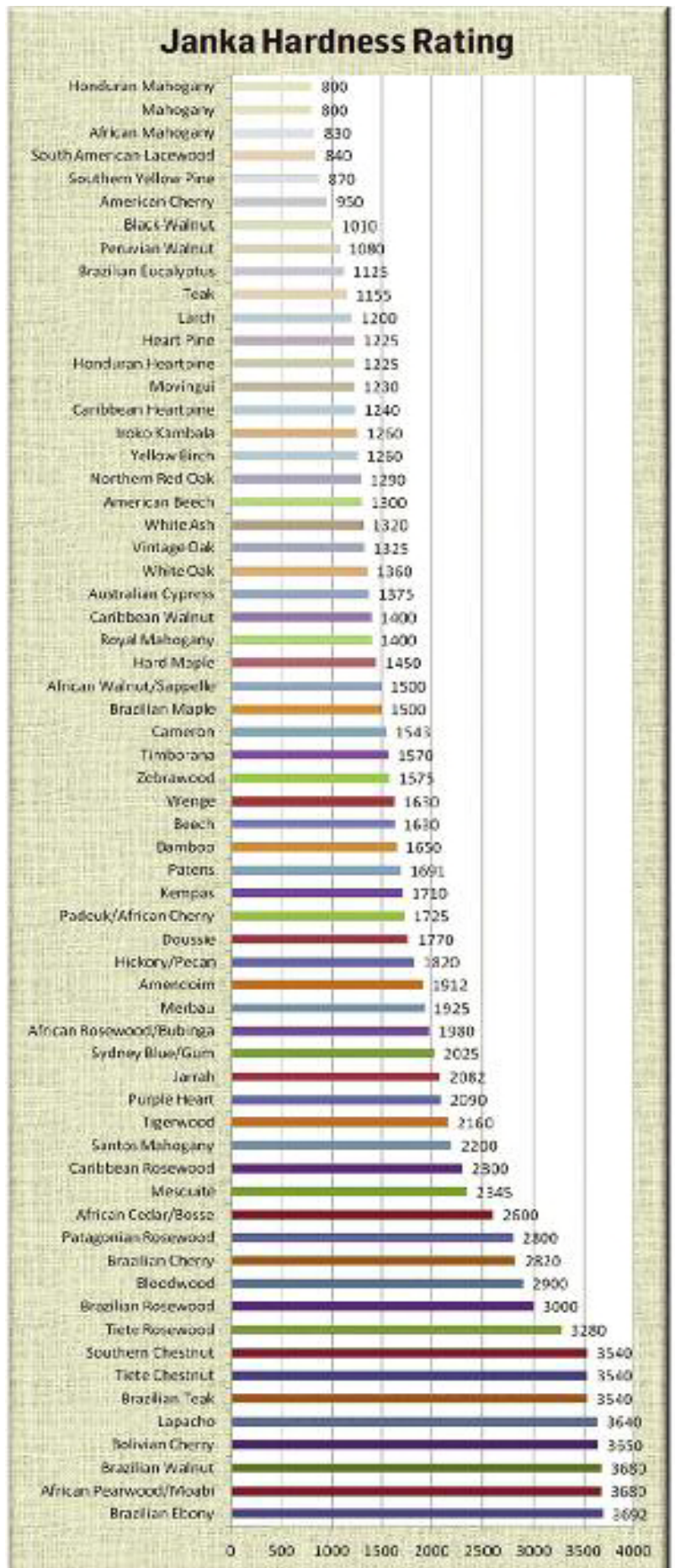
How about white oak? It has similar characteristics to red oak, is more stable, has a higher Janka rating (1360 vs. 1290) and in most cases is a little less expensive than red. When stained, white oak is virtually undetectable from red and retailers get a better margin. How? By selling its features. In addition, a rift and quartered white in natural is an impressive looking floor.

White ash, for example, makes a striking floor. It has good graining to help hide scratches and dents, stains better than both white and red oak, has a Janka rating of 1320 and is hard enough to make baseball bats. That is a pretty good selling feature.

Hickory contains many contrasting colors and characteristics to help with its maintenance; this species has recently been one of the hottest in the marketplace. It can also be stained and has a Janka rating of 1820.

And let's not forget the other North American species—maple, birch, beech, American walnut and American cherry.

If dealers want to make more money in the wood flooring industry, they should make sure they know alternative species and what makes them unique. It is also important to understand their distinctiveness. When a retailer is well educated and understands product details, he can quantify this information to consumers and get out of the red oak rut.







# American ENGINEERED HARDWOOD



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LINCOLNSHIRE  
PONTE VEDRA  
SAN MARCO  
RIDGECREST

Since 1985, Mullican Flooring has taken great pride in offering the highest quality Hardwood Flooring in the world.

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We are quick and nimble enough to provide Real-Time Service in your Real-Time World. And now we are proud to offer these five new collections of American-made Engineered Hardwood Floors.

**Hillshire** provides a versatile array of 3-inch and 5-inch widths to suit any taste, while **Lincolnshire** offers a beautiful selection of 5-inch Hand Sculpted widths.

**Ponte Vedra** offers 5-inch and 7-inch widths, as does Hand-Sculpted **San Marco**, while **RidgeCrest** is available in 3-inch and 5-inch widths. And all three are available up to 6 feet in length.

With four state of the art U.S. Manufacturing Facilities, Mullican Flooring is committed to the production of the finest American-made Hardwood Floors that are perfect for any setting and any dream.



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## selling

# Top 10 questions retailers can ask before

(Source: National Wood Flooring Association)

Consumers in the market for hardwood flooring must sort through numerous options—each offering different features, benefits and varied product details. To simplify the process for both shoppers and retail sales associates, asking specific questions is an important first step when it comes to qualifying a customer and making sure she purchases the right product for her needs. Here are 10 points RSAs can use to start the conversation.

### 1. What's your lifestyle like at home? Are you retired? Do you have teenagers living in the house? Young children or pets?

Determining the lifestyle of the customer to is probably the most important qualifying process for helping her select the product that will perform best based on her specific needs. This can help determine the kind of traffic the floor will get.

Wood floors can stand up to any lifestyle, but different products are made to perform well in different environments, both geographically and based on traffic. The species selected can have a major impact on performance as well.

Each wood species is rated for its hardness and durability using some-



Medium woods like hickory or oak will make a room appear more warm and cozy. Pictured here is Mannington's Black Isle hickory 5-inch wide plank format with rich colorations.

thing called a Janka scale (see page 14). The Janka scale gives a good indication of how likely a wood is to dent or show other wear. For example, domestic black cherry is ranked at 950 on the Janka scale, while Brazilian cherry is ranked much higher at 2820.

### 2. Is your home built on a slab, or over a crawl space or basement?

Knowing how the foundation of a home is constructed can help determine which products will work best. If a customer's home is built on a slab foundation, an engineered wood flooring product will likely perform best because of the way engineered wood floors are constructed (see page 4). Engineered wood floors will expand and contract less during fluctuations in humidity and temperature. They are also less susceptible to moisture related issues, which can be more common with slab construction.

Solid wood floors are manufactured using one solid piece of wood instead of multiple wood veneers. The grain of a solid wood floor runs in

one direction only, which makes it more susceptible to reacting to changes in temperature, humidity or moisture.

Both floors will perform well when used in the right environment. In addition, once installed, both a solid and an engineered wood floor made

## hardwood 101: selling

### The advantages of engineered hardwood flooring

BY HARRY BOGNER

Senior vice president, Unilin Hardwood

The perception of engineered hardwood flooring has undergone many shifts in the minds of designers and customers, but there's no question the quality and range of available options have never been better. With various choices and different kinds of customers, it's important to keep the following in mind when selling engineered hardwood.

#### Style and luxury

Engineered hardwood flooring manufacturers put a heavy emphasis on finishes, which translates to options dealers can offer that might not be available in solid constructions. Color choices, multiple species, semi-gloss to matte finishes, even a variety of surface textures—from smooth to more distressed wire-brushed or scraped—are relevant comparisons when selecting a floor.

#### Durability

Because engineered hardwood floors are all prefinished, manufac-

turers provide surface coatings that look great as soon as they're installed. These companies may also offer added protection if desired. Families with young children, for example, are always good candidates for this option.

#### Stability

Engineered hardwood is typically two veneers of hardwood sandwiched around a stable core of plywood or fiberboard. This stable core helps resist movement and warping that can occur due to changes in temperature and humidity.

#### Easy installation

Installing engineered hardwood floors is a breeze, which is probably why they are a common DIY choice. But they make professional installers' lives easier, too. Designed to float over most existing flooring, locking engineered floors typically snap or click together to form a tight joint and usually do not require specialized equipment. Not only can this reduce the cost for customers on tight budgets, but a whole floor can be finished easily in just a few hours and used immediately—no sanding, no staining, no mess.



# selling wood flooring



Light woods like ash or maple will make a room appear more open and airy. Pictured here is Mirage's Maple Grey Drizzle offering.

from the same species will look identical.

### 3. What temperature do you normally maintain in your home?

Wood floors will perform best when the household is kept within a narrow range of fluctuation in both temperature and humidity. This is because wood is a hygroscopic material, which means it will lose or gain moisture based on its environment. Keeping the surrounding space consistent will minimize any significant changes in performance or appearance.

Most wood flooring will contract or shrink during periods of low humidity, which can cause seasonal gaps to appear between floorboards. Then, during periods of high humidity—usually during the summer months—these seasonal gaps will close. This effect can be minimized by maintaining the home environment within the range identified as optimal by the installer. Generally speaking, wood floors perform best when the interior environment is maintained within a temperature range of 60 to 80 degrees fahrenheit and 30% to 50% humidity.

### 4. What's your home décor like? Is it formal, traditional, casual, country, modern or rustic?

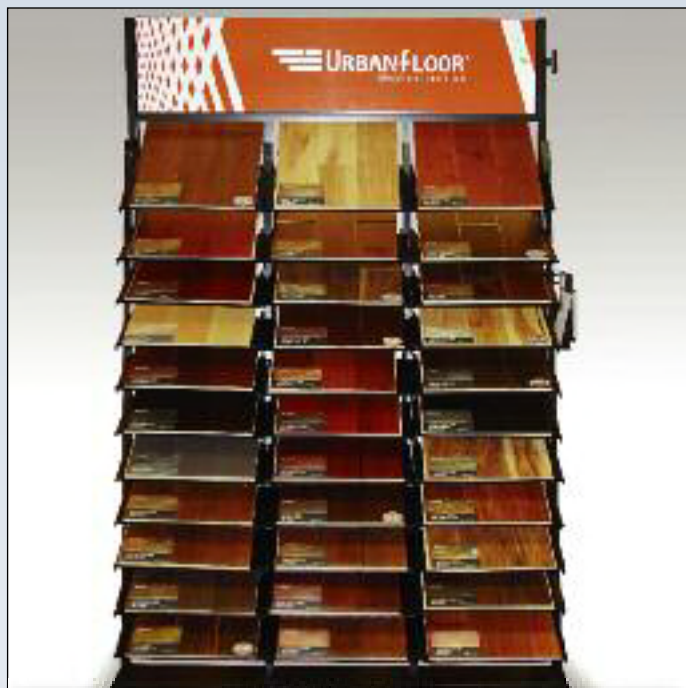
A customer's home décor will provide a big clue about which wood flooring types and species may work best in a space. Homes that are modern, traditional or formal will likely look best with wood floors that have a smooth surface, while homes that are casual, country or rustic will match with wood floors that have a rough or distressed texture. Smooth textures will also work better in homes with little foot traffic, while distressed textures will perform well in homes with small children and pets as they can better camouflage small scratches and dents.

The appropriate species can often enhance the home's décor as well. Generally speaking, dark woods like walnut or mahogany will make a room appear more stately and refined. Medium woods like hickory or oak will make a room appear more warm and cozy. Light woods like ash or maple will make a room appear more open and airy.

Imported species can offer a wide variety of colors, from the pinkish red of African bubinga to the creamy honey-gold of Australian cypress. More options include the dark reddish brown of South American Santos mahogany, the deep purplish brown of Mexican purpleheart or the dramatic blackish brown of African wenge.

**Continued on page 18**

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: URBANFLOOR



Urbanfloor's Lifestyle Collection display features five different species that give RSAs various selling options from contemporary finishes to time-worn distressing.

## A world of options to meet every taste and budget

Urbanfloor's No. 1 goal is to be a profitable brand for its distributor partners and authorized dealers. From product placement on television to social media campaigns and nationwide design magazine advertising, Urbanfloor seeks to maximize brand awareness with the goal of bringing customers to its dealers' doorsteps.

Urbanfloor's sample and display systems are easy to set up, heavily subsidized and readily available in both the U.S. and Canada. In addition, the company has three shipping locations to optimize the logistics of delivery and shorten product arrival time. Its knowledgeable, dedicated support staff is always on call to answer any questions or concerns that may arise.

Beyond brand name recognition and superior customer service, Urbanfloor offers product versatility and variety that will draw all kinds of consumers. With nearly 100 hardwood flooring options to choose from, there is not a taste or budget that it won't be able to easily satisfy. Urbanfloor offers eight diverse collections designed to cater to the full spectrum of client needs and preferences.

Urbanfloor invests in the longevity of its clients and the planet by structuring the business to comply with all environmental standards and regulations, including mandates on formaldehyde emissions. The health and safety of its customers and employees is of utmost concern, and it honors this cause by conducting rigorous third-party testing on all of its flooring and accessories.

Urbanfloor is a brand dealers and consumers alike can trust, not only for its record sales and popularity, but also for its integrity at every stage of the flooring process.



## selling

Continued from page 17

### 5. Will you be in your home long term or for just a few years?

Wood floors can last for the lifetime of a home when they are properly installed and maintained. This is especially important if a customer plans to remain in her home for many years. It can help to steer her toward high-end products that can last for generations, or toward solid wood floors, which can be sanded and refinished numerous times.

Conversely, if a customer plans to be in her home for just a few years, it might make sense to steer her to products that are more affordable, or toward engineered wood floors, which often cannot be sanded and refinished. This is not, however, true of all engineered products. Some engineered wood flooring is very high end, has an exceptionally thick wear layer and can be sanded and refinished during its service life.

### 6. Is choosing an environmentally friendly flooring option important to you?

Wood flooring is the most environmentally friendly flooring option available. Sustainable forest management makes it possible to harvest wood without any serious impact on the environment because trees are a renewable resource that can be replaced time and time again.

Trees are produced in a factory called a forest by a renewable source



Determining the prospective customer's lifestyle is critical for an RSA. Is the customer a retired couple with no grandchildren or a family with three small children and a large dog?

of energy called the sun. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the average annual net growth for hardwood is greater than average annual removals. For every cubic foot of hardwood removed, 1.66 cubic feet is added. In all, the standing hardwood volume in the U.S. currently is 328 billion cubic feet, an increase of nearly 90% since 1953.

Wood floors are also carbon neutral. Through the process of photosynthesis, trees absorb carbon dioxide and water from the atmosphere, into which oxygen is released back. This process makes wood—and wood floors—a carbon-neutral product.

### 7. Are you concerned with improving the indoor air quality of your home?

According to a study conducted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, wood floors do not harbor allergens, microorganisms or harmful pesticides that can be tracked in from outdoors. In addition, dust, mold and animal dander contamination is minimal in homes with wood floors, which improves overall indoor air quality, particularly for allergy sufferers.

A life cycle analysis of wood flooring conducted by the University of Wisconsin indicates wood flooring improves indoor air quality as well. The study compared five different floor coverings in regard to four sub-

Continued on page 22

## hardwood 101: selling

# Natural attributes, construction of engineered wood create appeal

BY PRISCILLA BERGERON

Communications manager, Lauzon

**H**ardwood floors are a sound investment for any homeowner. While the initial outlay can be higher than some other types of flooring, hardwood floors are remarkably durable, comfortable and aesthetically appealing. They are derived from natural renewable sources that are sustainable and no other material can replicate their inherent warmth and beauty. These are all selling advantages for retail sales associates.

When selling engineered hardwood specifically, it is important to understand the construction of the product, along with how it is made.

There are three main cutting methods for the hardwood top layer of an engineered floor. The dry, solid sawn involves letting the wood dry out slowly to keep the moisture from inside the wood cells intact, reducing the risk of cupping. Once the wood has dried, it is precisely sawn to the desired thickness for a better look and performance.

The advantages of this method are numerous:

- Gives the appearance of solid hardwood
- Preserves the natural color variations, uniformity and grain of

the species

- Ensures no repetitive patterns, as each board is unique
- Ultra-thick wear layer
- Can be sanded and refinished if required
- Provides a smooth and splice-free surface
- Less stress to the wood

The two other methods are rotary peeled and slice peeled. Rotary peeled entails boiling the log for a certain amount of time at a

specific temperature to prepare the wood. After it is scraped from the log with a blade working from the outside in, it is then pressed flat. The slice peeled process includes the same boiling method, but after the wood has been prepared it

is sliced from the end and then pressed to create a veneer. The main disadvantages of these methods are repetitive patterns, resemblance to plywood and an ultra-thin wear layer that can show imperfections.

Engineered hardwood combines the classic appearance of solid hardwood with the added benefit of technology to create more stability in any area of a home. It is generally faster to install, offers greater permanence under humid conditions and is suitable for more specialized spaces such as condominiums and basements. It is also offered in wider and longer planks, which is a popular choice in expansive spaces.





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## selling

# Leading retailers share intelligence on

It is easy to understand why hardwood flooring has emerged as such a strong consumer preference. Homeowners gravitate toward wood for its clean look, inherent value and environmentally friendly attributes. It also adds value to the home.

Still, the product does not sell itself, and is not necessarily the best flooring option for every job. Savvy flooring dealers know that selling hardwood is as much learning and understanding as it is explaining the difference between engineered and solid.

### Tip No. 1: Know your customer's needs

Hardwood is often the flooring of choice, but the bigger issue is “knowing when to sell hardwood to a customer and when to move her to another product,” said Olga Robertson, president of FCANetwork.

The majority of consumers desire hardwood floors but many times an active lifestyle with pets and young children or structural issues can be a concern. “Explain the trade-off because hardwood will scratch and dent,” Robertson said. “I don’t care what the manufacturer states on the warranty. Yet,

the majority of people want hardwood, so make sure you have a nice mix of products by species, price points and separate engineered from solid. This will streamline the process.”

Allen Clouse, director of retail sales at Star Lumber in Wichita, Kan., said if a customer is early in the process of shopping, his RSAs are trained to first ask a few open-ended questions to gauge the level of use/wear the

customer’s floor will endure. “Based upon the response, we try to guide the customer to choosing a species of wood that will help her gain the performance she needs. After we narrow down the species based on Janka ratings and wood characteristics, we help the customer find the color and price point that best fulfills her desires.”



Before jumping into the features and benefits of a product, RSAs should first conduct a lifestyle interview to see if hardwood is a good fit.

### Tip No. 2: Product knowledge

Wood floors can stand up to any lifestyle, but different products are made to perform well in different environments. The species selected

can have a significant impact on performance. Knowing as much as possible about a customer’s daily routine, family and environment can help to steer her in the right direction.

## hardwood 101: selling

# Simple talking points guide customers through selection process

BY BRIAN JONES

Vice president, product management wood, Armstrong

Converting shoppers into happy purchasers is every retailer’s goal and hardwood is a powerful tool to help reach that objective. For most folks, there is great value in hardwood; its inherent aesthetic appeal and quality of real wood floors are important to homeowners.

### Style

There are hardwood floors to complement any style, from traditional to trendy and rustic to refined. Smooth floors have a timeless appeal, while distressed offerings mimic the weathered look of aged or reclaimed wood. Handscraped floors offer a range of textural variations designed to create the look of handmade vintage wood floors.



Handscraped floors offer a range of textures designed to create the look of handmade vintage wood floors.

### Lifestyle

Choosing the right hardwood floor that meets customers’ expectations for durability is key. Some species of wood are naturally harder than others, thus more resistant to dents, dings and natural signs of wear. The hardness of a species can be increased by adding acrylic to the wood. For active homes, customers should be advised to choose

floors with residential finish warranties of 25 years or lifetime.

### Value

What makes one type of hardwood cost more than another? The laws of supply and demand determine the relative pricing of different species. Abundant American species like oak and maple are the most affordable while high-demand exotics will often have the highest prices. Within a species, price varies based on the grade of the lumber. Added treatments like distressing, handscraping, color washing, etc., are more labor intensive, which impacts price.

### Sourcing

Where hardwood is grown and manufactured makes a difference. Retailers and their customers can feel good about purchasing domestic hardwood floors, especially from reputable manufacturers that ensure responsible practices.

### Preference

It is important to show customers variety. Even if they just come in for a specific item, give people a chance to view all products in the category. Use the power of brands to highlight quality and profitable products. Customers will be confident and feel comfortable with the value.

# closing techniques

Dealers said the biggest mistake salespeople make when selling hardwood is selecting the wrong product for the job. Any RSA that sells hardwood should know if the application is below grade or on slab and whether or not it involves heat. With this information, every salesperson should know which product is best.

Salespeople need to have considerable product knowledge while the selection has to offer a reasonable value proposition that can be communicated to the customer. Salespeople are often encouraged to attend product knowledge seminars hosted by distributors, manufacturers and trade associations, which are especially important today considering the myriad of new products, species, qualities and finishes available in the market. The more you know, the more products you can sell.

“When you’re selling hardwood, you’re showing the value and longevity of the floor,” said Janice Clifton, owner of Abbey Carpets Unlimited Design Center, Napa, Calif. “We have a brochure we hand to every hardwood customer, informing her about the expectations of finished products and maintenance. We try to cover those bases ahead of time.”

## Tip No. 3: Qualify the customer

Before getting mired in the minutia of engineered vs. solid or hickory vs. maple, RSAs should first conduct a lifestyle interview to determine if hardwood is, in fact, the right product for the customer. “If it is, then I move forward making sure the customer understands the importance of humidity and temperature regulation before getting into features and benefits of engineered or solid hardwood,” said Kevin Murray, owner of Murray Floor & Window Coverings in Billings, Mont. “Jumping into features and benefits too soon could be a waste of time if hardwood is not a good fit for the client.”

Carlton Billingsley, president of Floors & More in Benton, Ark., said when selling hardwood floors his sales team qualifies the customer by



Flooring dealers need to invest in new samples and be willing to pull those that are not selling to replace them with new colors and styles.

asking about foot traffic, pets and the room or area for the job. “From there we ask about types of colors, finishes and species of wood she may like. Last, we want to know what the expectation is for the finished product and overall room design.”

## Tip No. 4: Stay on top of the latest trends

Trends come and go in the wood flooring industry, but a seasoned professional will always stay on top of the latest. The typical customer may be a few years behind the latest trends because she is looking at how other people have decorated their homes.

“We are constantly pulling samples that are not selling and adding new colors and styles in the store,” Clifton said. “You have to invest in your showroom and new samples.”

Keeping up with trends can enhance selling skills, which also helps salespeople close more sales.

## Tip No. 5: Be upfront with your customers

Billy Mahone III, manager of Atlas Floors in San Antonio, said rule No. 1 is to be upfront with customers when discussing hardwood floors because they typically require more care and maintenance vs. other flooring options. In the end it will be worth it, Mahone said. “No other flooring option adds the warmth and beauty to your home like a real hardwood floor.”

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: ELEGANCE EXOTIC WOOD FLOORING

### A reputable source that stands behind its products

Elegance Exotic Wood Flooring is not the largest player in the hardwood flooring market, but it has secured partnerships with many of the top flooring retailers because it simply does things the right way.

It all starts with being a reliable company with which to do business. Over the years, Elegance has formed long-lasting partnerships with key retailers in their respective regions and then protected each dealer by being exclusive to them. In other words, an Elegance dealer in San Mateo, Calif., will not have to worry about a competing retailer in his market getting the same product. It is a two-way street; if a major retailer is pushing the Elegance line, Elegance, in turn, will protect that relationship.

Claims—or lack thereof—are another rung in the Elegance success ladder. In fact, one of



Along with rich colors and exotic species, Elegance offers a thicker wear layer.

the company’s leading flooring retailers has cited zero claims in eight years with the same product line. That is almost unheard of today and speaks to the quality control that Elegance implements throughout its production process,

from idea to implementation.

No manufacturer can carve out a long-standing, successful business without having quality product in its lineup; Elegance offers both quality and value. For example, along with rich colors and exotic species is a wear layer that is much more thick than the average engineered product.

To further meet customer needs, over the last 10 years the company has scaled back to be more responsive to market needs. If a dealer needs a 7.5-inch Acacia, the company can deliver it. Elegance makes sure its products are always available and in stock.

Flooring retailers who work with Elegance can be assured of quality products from a well-funded company, with a long-term outlook that is fiercely loyal to its dealer partners.



## selling

### Continued from page 18

stances considered harmful to the atmosphere: carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxide and particulate matter. The results of the study showed that wood flooring had minimal emissions for carbon dioxide and no emissions for methane, nitrogen oxide or other particulates.

### 8. Are you looking to increase the value of your home?

Wood floors can add significant value to a customer's home. In a survey conducted with real estate agents across the country, 99% agree that homes with hardwood floors are easier to sell, 82% agree that homes with hardwood floors sell faster, and 90% agree that homes with hardwood floors sell for more money, up to 10% more. This means that if a homeowner were to invest \$10,000 in hardwood flooring valued at \$200,000, at an increased home sales value of 10%, the home potentially could sell for \$220,000, doubling the homeowner's initial wood flooring investment.

### 9. How many days can you and your family realistically not use the room in which the wood will be installed?

Chances are it will take more than one day to install new wood flooring, especially if old flooring must first be removed. It also may be

necessary to repair the subfloor, remove baseboards or shave down existing doors.

In addition, an unfinished wood floor will require more time than a prefinished wood floor. Unfinished wood floors provide more customization options, but they also require more hands-on time.

Generally speaking, the floors will be sanded several times on the jobsite and will have several coats of finish applied. Each of these finish coats must dry and then be slightly abraded before the next coat. Typically, three coats of finish can be expected, but this will vary by manufacturer, job location and finish type.

An on-site finishing job can take several days before the floor can be walked on, several more days before furniture can be put back into place and up to several months before area rugs can be placed on them.

A prefinished wood floor has finish applied at the manufacturing facility, so no customization is possible. It can be walked on immediately following installation, and furniture, throw rugs and appliances can be put back into place right away.

All wood flooring must be acclimated to the jobsite before it can be installed. The time required for proper acclimation will depend on the type of flooring, the species, the loca-

tion of the home and the weather. Acclimation can take from three days to a week or more.

### 10. Do you expect your wood flooring to look the same 10 years from now?

It is very important that the customer has realistic expectations about her wood flooring, which includes the assumption that the appearance of her floor will likely change over time.

Certain wood species may lighten, while other wood species may get darker. This change can be accelerated or pronounced when exposed to natural light. For example, wood flooring that is covered with an area rug may turn a noticeably different color over time rather than wood flooring that is constantly exposed to sunlight. The effect can be minimized by periodically moving furniture and area rugs within a room and by closing blinds during peak sunlight hours or installing light-filtering tints on large picture windows and skylights.

Wood floors will also show wear and tear over time. Small scratches and dents may appear in the finish, or even the wood, and should be expected. These minor markings can be repaired, but many homeowners believe these small imperfections add to the character and appeal of the wood as a flooring material.

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: DU CHÂTEAU

### Maintaining a reputation as trendsetter and design innovator

Best known for its exclusive hardwood floors and vinyl DeLuxe collections, DuChâteau is an encompassing lifestyle brand that specializes in the fine manufacture of luxury architectural finishes. The nearly decade-old company burst onto the scene in 2006 as the first to take wide-plank, hard-wax oiled hardwood floors to the American market. The company's innovative production techniques and artful designs have placed DuChâteau in high favor among designers and architects.

DuChâteau has continued to expand, answering the call of retailers clamoring for more. The San Diego-based company recently dropped its "Floors" moniker to reflect its evolution as a curator of fine goods. Its luxury offerings now encompass wall coverings, porcelain flooring and more. Each piece remains true to the brand as completely unique design statements that balance classic and modern aesthetics.

The pinnacle of DuChâteau's artistry still re-

mains with The Atelier Series, the brainchild of DuChâteau's master craftsman, Tom Goddijn, which



Known for its wide-plank, hard-wax oiled hardwood floors, DuChâteau is a design innovator of the highest order.

offers the highest quality, European-inspired hardwood flooring. Each top-selling color commands attention and brings an uncommon aesthetic and durability to any design space—the result of meld-

ing traditional processing methods with modern engineering and state-of-the-art technology.

Equally arresting in its elegance, the many collections of DuChâteau provide a striking dimensionality to the design environment. DuChâteau gives customers the options in a wide-plank, hard-wax oiled flooring from ultra-modern, smooth surfaces found in the Vernal collection to heavily distressed and rustic finishes notable of the Vintage Remains collection. Intricate, bold and well crafted, these offerings bring luxury finishes to the forefront of the design-minded.

Part of DuChâteau's growth is due to its commitment to its customers as well as the environment. DuChâteau stands by its products, its manufacturing and its promise to provide high quality, luxury products that neither sacrifice sustainability nor put profits above the health and safety of customers. That is why DuChâteau stands out as a trendsetter and design innovator.

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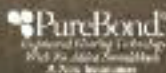
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## hardwood 101: selling

### Understanding your prospect

BY LUC **ROBITAILLE**

Vice president of marketing, Boa-Franc

**L**istening to a potential customer's needs is the key to a successful selling experience. A dealer or sales associate who considers and cares about the customer's requests will always encourage her to engage more than she would with the competition. The following steps include methods that should be used to help close a wood flooring sale.

#### 1. Analyze the situation using open-ended questions

Knowing the biggest concerns the consumer has about



Steering the discussion away from price and focusing on long-term value is one tip for a successful selling experience.

her project can help to anticipate objections and help the RSA be more proactive in the sales approach. For example, is timing an issue? Is she on a tight budget for this purchase? Ask questions about the type of project she is planning. Is this a new home or is

she renovating? These types of questions could uncover major details of the project.

#### 2. Find out product details

Asking about the square footage of the space and the sub-floor are obviously basic questions that need to be explored, but knowing if the job will be performed by a contractor or if it is a DIY project is crucial to adapt to a customer's needs with the right product recommendation and installation type.

#### 3. Determine what the customer wants in a product

Find out what the customer's level of comfort is when it comes to shopping for wood flooring. Consumers increasingly have access to information via the Internet, which means any questions they do ask are likely to be more in-depth and very specific to their own needs. Keeping front line staff up to date and in a position where they can confidently answer questions from concerned consumers will naturally create a greater feeling of confidence.

#### 4. Determine the appropriate product

Describe the various wood categories as well as any differences among them. Help customers understand the main points to consider when choosing a floor: design, quality, durability and cost. Try to steer the discussion away from price and focus on the long-term value of various products.

## selling

### Simple techniques help

**C**onsumers don't usually require much convincing when it comes to purchasing hardwood; the product comes with multiple positive attributes, only one of which is its visual appeal. In addition to a wide variety of finishes, styles and designs to choose from, its environmental friendliness and flexibility with installations also make hardwood attractive. But for the customer who is concerned about her budget, a little bit of upselling might help seal the deal and give her what she truly wants.

#### 1. Ask discovery questions

Before upgrading a customer, it is imperative to find out whether hardwood is really the right fit for her lifestyle. "First and foremost we have to discover what product is going to suit her needs," said Terry Patzner, sales, Hennen Floor Covering in Freeport, Minn. "You don't want to oversell her on something and you



With so many effects and designs available in hardwood—such as handscraping—customers should be made aware of all their options.

don't want to sell her something she doesn't need. If she has five dogs and 10 kids, hardwood isn't the best option for her."

By asking the customer discovery questions including "Is the environment controlled all year round?" and "Is there going to be a lot of water in the area?" Patzner is able to determine if hardwood best suits her needs. If she is a candidate for wood but she's checking out a less expensive product like laminate, he recommends comparing the two and demonstrating hardwood's natural charm.

"I show her the true beauty of hardwood. You can never get that with an imitation product—no matter how nice or how high quality the laminate or vinyl."

#### 2. Sell the value

Other types of floor covering materials may cost less than hardwood at the onset; however, hardwood is a major investment that lasts for many years and will prove cost-saving in the long run. Unlike other floors, there is no need to replace wood every few years because it tends to wear better over time in comparison. Retail sales associates should encourage customers to see hardwood as a value product rather than consider it in terms of dollars.

For example, the lifetime cost of wood is less expensive than replacing carpet and offers more years of service. Any color changes, scratches or dents that occur only add to the character of the wood as opposed to becoming a glaring flaw in the floor. In addition, if the homeowner wants to change the look of her floor, refinishing services and different staining techniques allow her to do so without replacing the entire room.

#### 3. Offer financing options

Financing offers give consumers more flexibility to upgrade to a higher quality product whether it's going from laminate or vinyl to hardwood or simply choos-

## upsell the customer



Hardwood tends to wear best over time, making it a long-lasting, value product.

ing a more expensive hardwood over a less costly option. Today's consumer expects financing options when it comes to large purchases and having the ability to pay a monthly rate opens up opportunities for her to spend a little more than she initially planned, ultimately ensuring she gets exactly what she wants.

"Research shows that consumers who participate in retail financing programs either purchase more goods or better quality goods," said Keith Spano, president of Flooring America. "It certainly helps the trade-up process and helps people stretch into a product they couldn't afford without financing. What we have seen is the average ticket almost doubles from the average credit card purchase to a finance purchase."

#### 4. Don't be afraid

For starters, RSAs should never automatically assume anything about a customer; the only way to provide her with what she wants is to show her all options. Customers look to retailers and RSAs as experts and, in turn, seek guidance from them. Being afraid to show customers something more expensive with the fear of scaring her away not only minimizes profits, but also does a disservice to the customer. Oftentimes RSAs will lead a customer to sale merchandise when in reality she might have spent more had she known better quality goods were available to her.

#### 5. Share your knowledge

Hardwood floors may seem complicated to the average consumer, whether it is her first flooring purchase or fifth. With so many advances in technology, it is overwhelming to think about all the different styles and types of hardwood flooring let alone the benefits and drawbacks of each. As with any product, educating the customer about her options is vital. With prefinished products, salespeople should take the time to explain different finish technologies and product warranties.

It also helps to show the consumer different products; no amount of words can better explain the differences between an engineered red oak in an autumn leaf stain and a solid handscraped hickory. Visuals help the customer communicate her ideas and hopes for the space. Large product samples, manufacturers' brochures and portfolios of past work are all tools sales professionals can use every day to upsell.

### A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: HALLMARK

## Solid and engineered 567: The best of both worlds

In an industry now flooded with products touting descriptions like "reclaimed," "distressed" and "hard-wax oil," Hallmark Floors has once again aimed its sights on creating a product that stands out among the herd. In this spirit, Hallmark Floors' flagship hardwood Organic collection is poised to take a dominant position in the flooring industry with its extensive list of unique and desirable features.

One distinguishing aspect of the Organic collection is its offering of both a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch solid and  $\frac{5}{16}$ -inch engineered in a total of 16 colors. The solids feature 3- and 4-inch planks whereas the engineered offers 5-, 6- and 7-inch random width planks—truly the first collection of its kind. Hallmark Floors' trademark longer 6-foot, 2-inch random lengths further enhance these generous widths. Both solid and engineered Organic products boast the same three guaranteed sandings and the highest possible stability with solid dry sawn faces. Furthermore, Organic 567 Engineered includes Hallmark Floors' Truecore Centerply birch core, topped with a 4mm sawn cut veneer face.



Hallmark's Earl Grey from the popular Organic 567 collection of engineered floors, is constructed of a Truecore Centerply birch core topped with a 4mm sawn cut veneer face.

Organic also embraces a fusion of classic and contemporary design styles, utilizing a 10-step reclaimed proprietary process that grants the face of the flooring a dynamic, rustic and fashion-forward visual. This true reclaimed look is expanded upon with natural aging techniques applied to French white oak, American hickory and walnut, and coated with Hallmark Floors' exclusive NuOil hybrid multi-layer oil finish for a tasteful matte luster that requires no immediate re-coat during installation. NuOil also allows for a less rigorous maintenance schedule and flaunts a higher durability than traditional hard-wax finishes.

To back up these claims, Hallmark Floors continues to endeavor to create a green product that is both environmentally and consumer friendly, placing the Organic collection under its Hallmark Healthy Homes product lineup. With a 100% VOC-free finish and exceeding CARB 2 compliance standards by over 50%, Organic and its sister collections are a healthy choice for any family. Compounded with the highest green third party certifications, Hallmark also fervently seeks a minimal impact to the environment in the creation of its products.



## selling

# Warranties as a selling point

(Source: World Floor Covering Association)

**A** manufacturer's warranty can be a great selling point for retailers. Warranties such as lifetime finish or 50-year limited residential use provide assurance that a product will meet or exceed consumers' expectations for long-lasting wear. But before selling hardwood flooring to a customer, it is important to make her aware of exactly what a product warranty covers and what it does not.

With any hardwood flooring product the sole purpose of the manufacturer's warranty is to protect the consumer if the purchase is found to be damaged or defective in some way.

Because planks are made of natural materials, certain imperfections are to be expected and are actually allowed per flooring industry standards. This includes, but is not limited to: finish imperfections, grading discrepancies, milling defects, color differences and general cutting waste. If flooring is found to be defective or damaged per the specifications of the warranty, the manufacturer typically agrees to replace or repair the defective product or refund the purchase price.

Straightforward? Not quite. This is because as an installed product, hardwood flooring can be impacted by many factors: improper installation, inadequate maintenance or post-installation damage caused by negligence, fire, water, excessive moisture, heat, extreme weather conditions, pets, insects and even high-heeled shoes. These can all cause flooring to sustain significant damage. And while these damages may impact the performance of the floor, rarely will those resulting from any of these circumstances be considered a product defect and thus be covered under a manufacturer's warranty. So, what protections does a manufacturer's warranty offer the consumer?

### 1. Structural warranties

Structural warranties guarantee the milling, grade and moisture content of the wood has been manufactured within industry standards and that the resulting planks are stably sound and won't split, crack or warp when properly installed. Many top name brands offer lifetime structural warranties on their products, which can include both unfinished and factory-finished flooring. These warranties often detail specific flooring prep and installation guidelines that must be followed to validate them.

### 2. Finish warranties

These cover the finish on factory-finished hardwood, guaranteeing the finish will not wear off under standard use. Finish warranties differ from structural warranties in that they will almost always place a time limit on the number of years for which the warranty is valid. Commercial warranties cover fewer years due to the product's exposure to higher traffic. But finish warranties imply a lot more coverage than they may actually provide. For example, a finish warranty does not cover scratches, dents, gouges or damage to the finish caused by moisture or

from dragging a heavy or sharp object across the floor—the main causes of most finish damage.

### What most warranties do not cover

In addition to some of the items mentioned, here are some exclusions under most manufacturers' warranties:

**1. Natural wood characteristics:** Factors such as age, wood grade and exposure to sunlight will also impact the visual appearance of wood. Naturally occurring characteristics of a particular species such as color, graining, mineral streaks and knots are not considered defects if they are appropriate for the grade of wood being purchased.

**2. Natural expansion/contraction of installed planks:** As a natural material, wood expands and contracts as a result of temperature changes and varying humidity levels. It is thus typical for properly installed flooring to experience some separation or spacing between planks, but this will not warrant a claim.

**3. Moisture-related issues:** Adhesion breakdown or dimensional changes caused by moisture or water damage are not covered under a manufacturer's warranty.

**4. Exposure to sunlight:** Exposure to sunlight on a daily basis will likely cause wood flooring to change in shade or color. Floor mats with rubber backings can also cause finish discoloration.

**5. Gloss reduction:** Normal surface wear may cause a reduction in the glossiness of hardwood flooring. This may be more noticeable with high-gloss flooring or flooring in darker stain colors.

**6. Structural support issues:** Hardwood can sometimes produce a squeaking noise. This is often the result of floor planks rubbing together due to improper or weak support from the subfloor. This and other issues related to the flooring's structural support are not considered a manufacturing defect.

**7. Improper use of flooring:** Hardwood flooring is manufactured for indoor use only. Flooring installed in areas that are directly exposed to the outdoor elements is not protected by the manufacturer's warranty.

**8. Repaired flooring:** Any attempt to repair flooring that is determined to be damaged will void most manufacturers' warranties.

**9. Failure to follow written manufacturer's installation instructions, or failure to maintain flooring per manufacturer's guidelines.** If consumers and/or installers do not adhere to manufacturer's instructions for installing or maintaining a floor, the warranty is essentially guaranteed to be void.



Any attempt by a homeowner or installer to repair flooring will void most warranties.



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## merchandising

# How retailers make a first—and lasting—

**A**s a fashion product, hardwood flooring is merchandised best when displayed prominently on the showroom floor, preferably via large samples to help consumers visualize the planks in their homes. Following are some methods used by top flooring retailers to showcase the product.

### 1. Large sample sizes

Nebraska Furniture Mart (NFM) uses large samples to designate in-stock products. This tactic sets the products apart from the rest of the vendor samples and shows them off in a better light. “Customers are naturally attracted to the larger format because they can more easily visualize it in their homes,” said Dave Snedeker, division merchandising manager, flooring, NFM.

Using large samples has increased NFM’s sell-through rate on stock goods to about 50% of its total wood sales. “This has been a very effective use of space and concentrated sales where we want them to be,” he continued.

Snedeker believes the best strategy to sell wood flooring is simply to show the consumer her options and answer questions thoroughly. “Let her make informed decisions as to what works best for her family’s lifestyle. With over 50 different wood selections in stock, we think

we have whatever she needs to improve her lifestyle.”

### 2. Position it prominently

Since many consumers aspire to own hardwood flooring, why not display it prominently? That’s the idea at Worldwide Wholesale, with three New Jersey locations. “We position our wood department near the entrance of each store,” said Darren Braunstein, vice president. “We feature our stocking wood in large panels that show the natural variations of grain and color. We also have many display floors installed throughout the wood department. This helps our customers to visualize and make a decision.”

Worldwide Wholesale offers a large selection, but avoids overlapping styles and colors from different brands. “We find success in showing more displays of fewer SKUs,” Braunstein noted.

### 3. Bold assortment

In recent years, D&M Interiors Flooring America in Appleton, Wis., has reconfigured its entire assortment from mostly soft surface to 60% hard surface. Hardwood was the centerpiece of the transformation.



The Vertical Connection’s 10,000-square-foot showroom in Columbia, Md., which includes 20-foot high ceilings, has had a tremendous impact on business.

## hardwood 101: selling

# Product knowledge is the first step to true customer service

BY BRIAN GREENWELL

Vice president, sales and marketing, Mullican

**A**s the hardwood flooring industry continues to expand its product offerings, customers report being confused by the many options available. Problems that arise because of these concerns can be easily fixed if the retailer is knowledgeable about products, manufacturers and the installation process.

The first questions retailers should ask the customer should be where in the home she intends to have the flooring installed and what type of subfloor will be underneath the new floor. Retailers should also know whether the customer intends to use a professional installer.

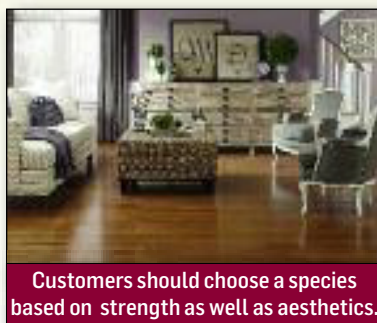
The answers to these questions often dictate whether the customer will be purchasing a solid or an engineered product. While some homeowners may be able to choose either, many will find they are limited to one product type or the other. These inquiries help narrow the focus.

Another important factor for retailers and customers to consider is wood species. Customers often focus on a specific species for its aesthetic features rather than its functional attributes. Just as each species has a distinct grain pattern, each also has a specific degree of hardness. Spaces that are expected to see a lot of abuse should have a harder wood on the floor.

The remaining decisions to be made by customers when purchasing flooring tend to be purely visual and rather subjective. Each manufacturer offers a variety of colors, textures and treatments. Add in the variation of lengths, widths and thicknesses of the flooring available, and the customer can become overwhelmed by the abundance of choices.

Retailers can be most helpful by offering a broad array of samples. Shoppers like to see and

touch various options and compare them side-by-side. Brochures filled with information about specific manufacturers, product offerings and sustainable practices have proven to be effective tools to educate RSAs and consumers about the available options.



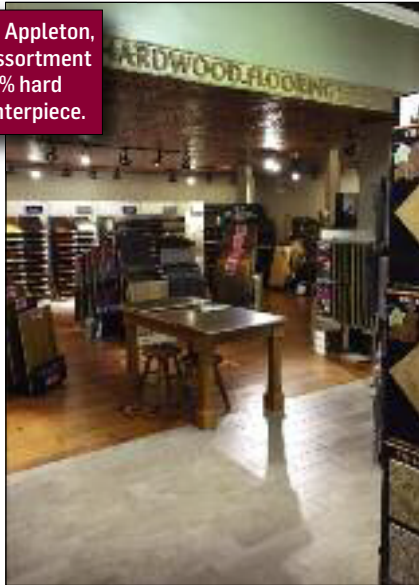
Customers should choose a species based on strength as well as aesthetics.

# impression

D&M Interiors Flooring America in Appleton, Wis., has reconfigured its entire assortment from mostly soft surface to 60% hard surface with hardwood as the centerpiece.

“We have an entire room approximately 18 x 26 feet dedicated solely to hardwood with an array of flip racks, waterfalls and 3 x 3 wall panels with our specials or go-to products,” said Bill Huss, owner. “We carry many varied-width and handscraped products that seem to be the hot styles or looks at this time. From a strategy standpoint we sell away from solids due to the radical climate change and humidity levels in Wisconsin. Also, the machine-finished products give you a more consistent top coating and many carry aluminum oxide for more resistance to scratching.”

Huss said the big box stores have driven down the retail price point on wood; his average midpoint retail price is \$7.99 per square foot, however 75% of sales are from \$5.99 to \$8.99. “The difficult part is still attaining margins on identifiable products due to intense competition. I’ve worked hard to find unique lines and some private labels through Flooring America to create separation from my local competitors.”



## 4. Fresh perspective

Bob Wexler, owner of Advanced Wood Floors in San Antonio, Texas, hates the phrase, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Why? “Because it will break some day,” he said. “If you are not paying attention, it is going to break and your business will suffer.”

Advanced Wood Floors has been in business for decades exclusively as a hardwood flooring dealer. Wexler said keeping things fresh is one key to success. In his 2,500-square-foot showroom, merchandising displays are tweaked on an ongoing basis. The displays every year are reset, and every five years there is a major overhaul of the merchandise and how it is displayed.

“We have full-sized samples on the walls, but not a ton of them,” he added. “There is a free flow to the showroom and there isn’t any clutter. It’s about providing a visualization for your customers to see the different looks.”

## 5. Impactful showroom

With its 20-foot ceilings and 10,000-square-foot space, the showroom at The Vertical Connection in Columbia, Md., resembles a trade show floor. Since expanding its space in 2011, the Carpet One store has seen business climb, with hardwood sales up 15% in the past year.

“The showroom has had a tremendous impact on our business,” said Adam Joss, co-owner. “It certainly has been a worthwhile investment. Hardwood seems to be selling itself these days. Wood just seems to be in much greater demand than carpet.”

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: LAUZON



Aside from their environmentally friendly features, Lauzon floors are known for distinctive looks such as this red hickory from the Ambiance collection.

## Green footprint, sustainable practices paramount to success

Thirty years ago David Lauzon had a dream and a vision. From that grew what has become a North American leader in supplying customers with premium hardwood flooring.

Long before it became fashionable, Lauzon made a commitment to building a business around environmental and social responsibility. The company knows the beauty of a wood floor begins with a sapling and it is deeply aware of how precious that resource is, so it rigorously adheres to forestry stewardship best practices and holds itself to the highest environmental standards. As stewards of the nearly 2 million acres of forest in its care, the manufacturer carefully plans and executes all harvests and works tirelessly to do things right, from forest to floor.

When customers choose a Lauzon floor, they can take comfort in knowing its policies are designed to protect the forest for generations to come. Whether Canadian or imported, Lauzon chooses wood sourced only from sustainably managed forests. Its portfolio even includes a selection of FSC-certified products.

Lauzon is ISO 14001 and Rainforest Alliance Certified, which guarantees the products it manufactures have been grown and harvested according to environmentally and socially responsible practices.

A state-of-the-art sawmill allows the company to precisely calibrate production for high-yield use of every block of wood. To minimize its environmental footprint, it has also implemented a zero waste policy.

All of Lauzon’s aesthetically appealing, superior quality hardwood floors are manufactured without solvents, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or formaldehyde, and they meet the strictest standards for toxic emissions. All hardwood, including the company’s engineered flooring series, is fully compliant with CARB 2—the strictest norm in the industry. Lauzon products have been tested according to ASTM D6007-14 standards for formaldehyde emission, and the results indicate an emission level so low it is barely within the detection limit. In addition, Lauzon’s Titanium finish uses an advanced antimicrobial treatment to prevent the growth of bacteria and fungi.

With advanced technologies, customers are able to acquire striking and strong hardwood floors while taking comfort in protecting their families’ health and the environment.



## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MOHAWK

### The latest in tones, textures, sizes

Understanding the needs and wants of consumers is an important part of closing a sale in today's market. It is crucial for RSAs to keep their fingers on the pulse of the latest trends in tones, textures and sizes of hardwood flooring.

It is no secret that the visuals and textures of hardwood are desired by many of today's consumers; these characteristics even influence styles in laminate, tile and luxury vinyl tiles and planks. When it comes to the actual surface of the hardwood, handscraping techniques remain popular while wire brushing, the latest design

method, offers a lighter texture and more natural appeal. With this technique an actual wire brush scrapes the soft wood off the top of the plank, leaving only the hardest wood and exposing the striking grain underneath. Consumers often prefer these hardwood planks for their enhanced character.

As for the hottest colors in hardwood flooring, gray tones are popular for home-

owners looking to bring a modern yet neutral palette to interiors. Consumers are also moving away from red and orange hues, going for darker, chocolate-colored planks that are richer, warmer and easier to match when making decorating changes over the years. Airy white washes and gentle grays make up the more neutral palette desired by some end users. A pale, antiqued floor can softly brighten a smaller room and add an open, light feel.

The size of hardwood planks also makes a difference as wider widths have become exceedingly popular. Wider planks make rooms look and feel larger, and they create fewer seams, resulting in less lines and a more luxurious visual overall. These selections also allow for a faster installation as installers are dealing with fewer planks than they would with those that are narrower and/or have varied lengths.

Consumers now often prefer multi-width planks within the same floor as opposed to only using one consistent width throughout the entire space.

Mohawk hardwood collections feature a wide range of color, width and texture options so dealers can help their customers create their perfect hardwood floors.



Mohawk's Sawbridge collection in hickory is featured in widths of 4, 6 and 8 inches.

## trendspotting



Shaw's Mineral King features a sophisticated wire-brushed texture that accentuates the natural grain pattern in the floor.

### Subtle, refined textures offer additional options

**H**andscraped hardwood looks are without a doubt still trending, but the range of possibilities is continuing to grow when it comes to scrape techniques and texture variations. Subtle scraping and wire brushing are two textures that are becoming increasingly popular. Heavy-scraped and distressed looks, like what one might find in the Texas market, can be a little too harsh for many consumers, so there is now more demand for subtler, more contemporary looks.

"It used to be that you could find either scrape or smooth, but now there are many variations in between," said Natalie Cady, category manager, hardwood, Shaw. "When you develop a product now, you don't just say A or B. You say, 'Well, we can have this color but also this texture, let's see what it looks like.' It becomes part of the development process whereas previously texture wasn't represented until the very end."

Shaw has five texture categories for its products: smooth, subtle scrape, wire brushed, heavy scrape and distressed. "Subtle scrape has subtle undulations, maybe just a scrape but not a chatter,

while heavy has chatter, scrape and a lot going on," Cady explained. "Wire brushed is somewhere in between because we have products that are wire brushed across the complete board and we have products wire brushed sporadically in which you don't scrape the whole board—just certain aspects of it to get a natural variation."

Wire-brushed texture is a very different technique from handscraped because the scrape runs along the grain pattern, accentuating it and giving it a weathered yet sophisticated look whereas handscraped is an all-over movement across the board. "Wire brushing has been around for a while, but it's been about the evolution of the overall picture," Cady noted. "Wire brushing can be a great accompaniment to [a certain] color palette. It becomes an entirely new product."

Whether heavy, subtle or wire brushed, incorporating some kind of texture elongates the overall life of a floor as texture tends to hide everyday wear. Giving consumers more options allows them to utilize texture while staying true to their styles and preferences.

## The latest neutral opens gray to more markets

**G**reige is the color combination of gray and beige and, more elegantly, the French and Italian translation for “raw silk.” It is a color trend that has been building steam for some time and is now emerging in the hardwood industry, riding on the coattails of gray’s ongoing popularity. Greige is the industry’s most recent response to this gray trend, but it has been softened for the residential market and given more flexibility and staying power.

“Taupes and warm grays are definitely trending,” said Allie Finkell, vice president of administration, American OEM. “Residentially, the grays are not as icy as some of the commercial grays and browns are getting more of a gray base than a red base. It’s about adding gray to brown and to other neutrals—more of a European palette.”

While cooler and smoky grays are still very popular, they can be found mostly in commercial work and new construction, while warmer grays like greige tend to work

best for residential remodel work because they can blend with existing wood palettes. “New construction can go that route [of cooler grays], but when you’re doing renovation work, you don’t want to redo everything,” Finkell said. “Having complex neutrals allows [end users] to modernize certain pieces that can blend with wood colors if [they] have wood working in [their homes].”

The amount of warm or cool tones added to a base ultimately determines where the color will work best. For example, a brown base with a hint of gray will work for most traditional markets, whereas a gray base with a touch of brown or beige can go into a more urban demographic.



The blending of these tones can also take a trend from the West Coast to the East Coast. “Most color trends start on the West Coast and work their way east,” said Tammy Perez, senior brand manager, Mohawk Hard Surfaces. “How do you bring these coastal colors east? Coastal colors aren’t really appropriate for everyone so they found a happy marriage with greige. It’s about blending those colors together to create something that works for everyone.”

### hardwood 101: design

## Interior design expertise can help sell floors

BY TONY MEGREH

Vice president, marketing and customer relations, Urbanfloor

**A**s a floor covering sales professional, a knowledgeable dealer will encounter a customer who may ask, “How do I coordinate the wall color with my hardwood flooring?” Remember, the homeowner comes to a flooring specialist because she needs his expertise. That’s what separates a local dealer from the big boxes. The more you know about flooring—and the basics of interior design—the higher the probability of closing the sale.

Sometimes a customer just wants something easy that will work with her décor. Guess what? That option does, in fact, exist. These choices are called neutral colors and are not meant to make any bold statements—yet they still can provide an appropriate style that can be appreciated. Despite the

color or hue of the hardwood floor, these wall colors are sure to mesh very well—consider white, ivory, cream, tan and taupe.

### Center of attention: All eyes on the floor

There are times when flooring becomes the center of attention in the room. Providing contrasting colors could work in this situation, but there may be a better idea: selecting a color based on intensity.

Say a customer has dark wood floors and wants to be sure they remain the focal point. In that case, the RSA may want to offer a lighter color such as light gold, pale blue or peach, creating a contrast that would put more emphasis on the floors than the walls. It’s a design technique used to keep the floor at center stage.

*Remember:* Retail sales associates should never be afraid to ask for someone’s opinion on an idea; in the end it can expose the customer to additional options that give her more design possibilities.



Knowing the basics of interior design, such as how hardwood flooring meshes with a room’s overall décor, can help RSAs close the sale.



## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MERCIER

### The importance of buying quality, prefinished hardwood

Since Mercier Wood Flooring pioneered the prefinished hardwood market more than 35 years ago, it has continued to be a visionary and an innovator in the marketplace with its oil finishes: Mercier Generations with Greenguard certification and Pure Expression by Mercier.

The Mercier Generations finish with Greenguard certification guarantees both retailers and customers can be assured the manufacturer is producing with environmental intelligence and safety in mind. Made from 100% pure soybean oil, this particular finish is hypoallergenic, antimicrobial and non-yellowing along with no VOCs. With 35-year residential finish and five-year commercial finish warranties as standards, this assurance is unequaled and outshines the competition.

With the Pure Expression by Mercier finish, dealers can feel comfortable selling the best looking and most durable oil finish in the market. Its 10-year maintenance-free warranty (regular oil floors require an annual maintenance program)

proves again that Mercier Wood Flooring is on the forefront of innovation and technology.

What are customers looking for in a quality finish? Obviously durability and long-lasting beauty along with ease of maintenance—qualities that are assured with Mercier finish capabilities. The manner in which the company applies its finishes not only makes its products the most durable, but also provides one of the clearest and most transparent finishes. This is truly the key characteristic for making a hardwood floor look better and maintain its finish for a lifetime.

Whether the floors are sold at the distributor level or on a retail showroom floor, the winning products should have the finish qualities that appeal to consumers, such as those from Mercier Wood Flooring. Selling floors without these qualities short-changes the customer.



Mercier continues to be a market innovator with distinctive products such as its Pub series.

## trendspotting

### Wider planks, multi-widths redefine traditional hardwood

It wasn't long ago that 5-inch wide planks were considered the standard of wide plank hardwood flooring, but that trend has seen a significant change. "There's definitely been a center point established, which is somewhere between 7 and 8 inches, that has become extraordinarily popular,"

said Dan Natkin, senior director, residential products, Mannington.

Wider planks have become more achievable now because of the increased popularity of engineered hardwood. There aren't many solid woods that can go wider than 5 inches, and if they do they're much more expensive. Wider planks can also be more sensitive to temperature and humidity and, therefore, can expand or contract more than a narrower plank. Engineered products improve the dimensional stability of these selections.

The popularity of realistic, natural effects in hardwood is also driving this trend as wider planks offer larger canvases for design elements. Aesthetically, wider planks also offer consumers a unique look and allow for fewer seams in the floor.

Mixed widths and lengths throughout the floor are also gaining prominence. "Multi-width formats in conjunction with these wider widths create more variation throughout the floor," Natkin said. "It's almost a throwback to the floors of old, where they took whatever lumber they could and put the natural mix down on the floor."

But Natkin believes the wide plank trend is beginning to cap out. "I think it's going to stabilize. First, because of raw materials; trying to find enough raw materials to produce a 7- or 8-inch wide plank requires old growth trees, and there is only a certain amount of them out there. The



Mannington's Mercado Oak line offers 7-inch wide planks that showcase its handcrafted features and variation from plank to plank.

other [reason] is because of the approachability from a consumer standpoint—if you have a small house or a small room, a really wide plank doesn't work."

Wide planks can both simplify and complicate the installation process. On a basic level, wider planks mean installers don't have as many planks to install. On the other hand, wider products can be more unstable, so remember that proper installation practices become even more important when dealing with these larger options.



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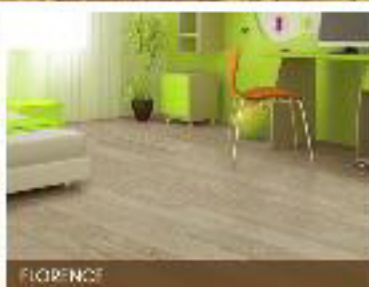
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## environmental

# Compliance: What dealers need to know

Earlier this year “60 Minutes” aired a report that exposed high levels of formaldehyde in Lumber Liquidators’ laminate flooring. This exposé ultimately gave a warning for flooring products other than laminate, including hardwood. It served notice to the flooring industry about the importance of being compliant with regulations such as the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the Lacey Act, which prohibits the import of illegally logged timber in the U.S.

Following is a list of 10 key points that flooring dealers should know about both CARB 2 and Lacey Act compliance.

### 1. Check for proper labels

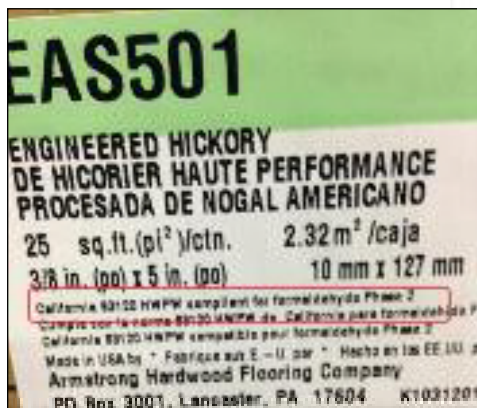
Manufacturers must show the following when properly labeling finished goods containing composite wood products:

- Manufacturer’s name
- Date of production
- Statement of compliance

### 2. Keep proper records

Suppliers must include a statement with prod-

ucts denoting compliance with regulations; dealers should have this information handy. Check for a statement on invoices or bills of all products made with HWPW, PB or MDF. Retailers must keep records of invoices and of all



This engineered hickory from Armstrong is certified as CARB 2 compliant.

regulated purchases of finished goods. It is imperative for records to show the date of purchase and the supplier, and they must be kept for at least two years.

### 3. Inspections

All retail facilities that sell or supply composite wood products are subject to inspection by CARB staff, who may purchase goods for laboratory testing to determine compliance with emissions standards.

### 4. Be prepared

As of today, the Composite Wood Products Regulation—one of the most stringent regulations in effect to limit formaldehyde emissions from composite wood products—is only being implemented in California. While other states have not adopted similar regulations yet, the Environmental Protection Agency is developing a national regulation based on California’s, which could take effect nationwide in the near future.

### 5. Responsibility for non-compliant products

The importer will ultimately be held responsible for non-compliant products. However, all players in the supply chain from the raw board manufacturer to the retailer are poten-

## hardwood 101: compliance

# Why product safety is important today

BY MOLLIE SURRETT

Senior director, public relations, content and social media, Mohawk

In recent months the topic of formaldehyde levels in products manufactured in China has been spotlighted in the national news. For flooring manufacturers and specialty retailers, this trending issue provided an opportunity to leverage their expertise and win over consumers by ensuring the products they sell are from reputable manufacturers who adhere to CARB 2 standards.

The issue of compliance comes at a time of heightened awareness among consumers who are showing greater interest in where products come from, how and where the raw material is sourced, and who stands behind these offerings.

The bottom line is compliance matters more now than ever before, which is why RSAs are at the ready to assure customers the products they are about to purchase are manufactured responsibly and without the addition of harmful chemicals.

If further selling support is needed, here are some additional tips:

**Made in the USA:** Look for the American flag on product merchandising and labeling. Whether out of a sense of patriotism, a desire to help the American economy or the belief that U.S.-made

products are of higher quality, consumers increasingly want to shop Made in the USA products.

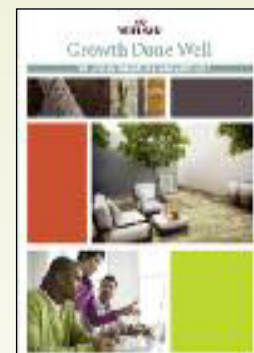
**Third-party certifications:** Retailers and consumers deserve the peace of mind in trusting that their flooring products are sourced, manufactured, distributed and serviced responsibly. Certifications show the actions manufacturers have taken to assure their products can be part of a healthy indoor environment.

**FloorScore:** FloorScore certifies that hardwood flooring meets strict indoor air quality standards.

**California Air Resources Board:** California Air Resources Board (CARB) ATCM 93120 Phase 2 certification ensures hardwood flooring meets formaldehyde emissions standards.

**Lacey Act:** The Lacey Act certifies engineered and hardwood products are legally harvested and compliant. This landmark legislation is the world’s first ban on trade in illegally sourced wood products.

Today’s consumer desires a hardwood floor that complements the rest of the décor in her home. She also wants to know the product is going to be safe to live with long term.



# about Lacey Act, CARB

tially liable until enforcement investigations determine otherwise. There is no product certification or chain of custody that will insulate anyone from an enforcement action; CARB enforcement staff will evaluate each situation on a case-by-case basis. It is important to note that CARB will enforce this standard through random product testing and a strict chain of custody requirement.

## 6. Promote Lacey

The Lacey Act can help a business if it promotes its compliance. By selecting the right suppliers and choosing product lines carefully, dealers can use Lacey to enhance their imported product offerings and reassure customers of green efforts.

## 7. Know your responsibilities

It is a U.S. federal offense to illegally handle plants/plant-based products. Examples of such activities include harvesting logs against regulations, trading a product without paying proper duties or other fees, and smuggling or stealing lumber. Lacey covers material from

every country including all wood and wood products harvested and produced in the U.S.

## 8. Due diligence

The Lacey Act confers responsibility on all members of the flooring industry, including retailers, to conduct due diligence in making a reasonable effort to understand and evaluate their supply chains. To do this, flooring dealers should ask questions of their suppliers to make sure they are doing their best to harvest and supply legal wood.

## 9. Be vigilant

No dealer should passively rely on others to make the risk assessment for them. Some simple guidelines include:

- Creating a written company policy stating the intent to buy/sell only legal wood products.
- Documenting actions. In the event of an investigation, written policies, checklists and protocols will be primary evidence that due care was exercised.
- If the price of a product is well below

market, ask more questions.

- Knowing where wood was harvested. If it is coming from a higher risk country, then realize the risk is greater. If it comes from a low risk country, verify that it was not first imported from a high-risk area. Use third-party certifications when possible.

## 10. Red flags

The Department of Justice expects the following flags to trigger additional questions by the importer/buyer and could mean that parties involved with these transactions must meet a higher standard of care:

- Goods that are significantly below going market rate
- A lower price is offered for goods without paperwork
- Paperwork is suspect, such as not matching product ordered or anticipated possible country of origin
- Unusual sales and delivery methods are used, and rational answers to questions are not forthcoming

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: ARMSTRONG

### Quality, innovation from a world-class brand

Buyers are more comfortable spending again, and they want an attractive, quality product for their dollars. Hardwood is all about beauty and quality; it continues to be desired by homeowners as the ultimate complement to any design style and taste, and is often the flooring of choice.

Unique and specialty visuals stimulate consumer interest while retailers offering dramatic styles and differentiated products at competitive prices win sales. Designer driven, high performance products at desired prices, like Armstrong's Prime Harvest, American Scrape and Performance Plus collections, appeal to today's consumers.

Guiding customers through the selection process and making the sale is easy with collections that meet various needs. For example, the popular American Scrape hardwood now includes maple. Ten new colors are available in both solid and engineered constructions. In Armstrong's smooth traditional offering, Prime Harvest features maple, hickory and oak. With multiple color, width, species and construction options, Prime Harvest makes it easier than ever to find the perfect floor. Finally, in the performance hardwood



In Armstrong's smooth traditional offering, Prime Harvest features maple, hickory and oak.

category, the popular Performance Plus hardwood collection now includes 15 low-gloss options and new color choices. All floors are crafted from premium-grade Appalachian hardwood and are manufactured at Armstrong's U.S. facilities.

#### In the retail showroom

Armstrong is simplifying the hardwood selection

process by offering options that can be tailored to the customer's taste and lifestyle to make both the shopping process for consumers and the selling process for retail sales associates trouble-free.

A new modular merchandising system for all Armstrong hardwood products is transforming the retail showroom and changing the way products are shown in store. The displays are flexible, versatile and offer uniformity at retail with a consistent design, regardless of format, across categories for both the Armstrong and Bruce brands.

Armstrong's new wood selling system offers customized solutions for each region. A retailer can pick a customized display footprint and wood assortment from a recommended list, with separate categories for the four most popular hardwood categories: traditional, handscraped, specialty and performance. The display is organized by design, color and price, with clear messaging graphics to guide the selling process. Retailers can also visit Armstrong Connect for any training needs.



## environmental

# Common questions

**H**ardwood flooring is a classic option when building or remodeling a living space. While an old favorite, consumers will still have many questions about hardwood, including its environmental aspects. Below are some commonly asked questions and helpful answers for customers.

### Does wood flooring promote a healthy indoor environment?

Yes. Bacteria, dust and dirt do not embed themselves in wood flooring. Simple regular maintenance—such as dust mopping, sweeping or vacuuming—keeps wood floors clean.

### Is wood flooring hypoallergenic?

Millions of people suffer from sensitivity to chemicals and toxins. Tests by leading allergists have proven wood flooring provides a healthier environment for allergy sufferers as wood doesn't harbor irritating dust and microorganisms.

### Is the natural environment protected during the harvesting and manufacturing of wood flooring?

Yes. Far from a depleting resource, hardwood is sustainable and commercially more available now than ever before. On the 486 million acres of forestland in the United States classified as commercial, significantly more wood is added in new growth each year than is harvested. For hardwood species, 90% more wood is added annually in net growth than is removed through harvest.

### Once installed, how often must wood flooring be replaced?

Every 100 years or so. In fact, the heart pine

floors in historic Bacon's Castle in Virginia are more than three centuries old and counting. Simple care and maintenance keep wood floors visually appealing for a lifetime. Instead of laying an entirely new floor when the original is worn, hardwood can be rejuvenated with sanding and refinishing. When completed by a wood flooring professional, wood floors need only to be refinished every 10 to 15 years, or 10 to 12 times during a floor's life. And when a wood floor's useful life is over, it is completely biodegradable.

### Is recycled wood flooring available?

Yes. Wood salvaged from a variety of sources, including old barns and factories, is a popular design trend. Wood recovered from riverbeds is another style becoming more widespread in the industry. Logs that sank during logging operations years ago are being recovered by a number of companies and are used to create unique flooring. Today's only significant source for heartwood from long-leaf pine is through reclaimed timbers from warehouses and factories constructed during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Chestnut, hemlock, poplar, walnut and cypress are other options.



## hardwood 101: sourcing

# Navigating the waters of overseas production

BY BILL SCHOLLMAYER

CEO, Johnson Hardwood Floors

**S**everal years ago, *Floor Covering News* published comments on choosing a Chinese supplier. At that time, it was fairly easy to offer some common sense suggestions when dealing with products manufactured in China. "Make sure your supplier understands the business with respect to consumer expectations and claims" and "Make sure they have feet on the ground in China to oversee production" were good pieces of advice a few years ago.

While those suggestions still have merit, the flooring business has gotten much more complicated. Sure, lots of hardwood flooring is still produced in China, but what about Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Guatemala and now Mexico? What about component production, in which a product is partially produced in one country and shipped to another for scraping, finishing and packaging? While it may seem like this only happens on the other side of the world, think again. Some U.S.-based companies make use of lower cost labor in Mexico or Guatemala for the same end result, namely to offer the consumer an attractive product at a more affordable price.

Whether manufacturers like it or not, this is a global economy, and for better or for worse, Made in America doesn't always apply to a variety of consumer goods like electronics, clothing, cars and, of course, hardwood flooring. Whether a product is completely produced off shore or is component produced, one common theme prevails for the buyer to remember—buy from a reputable company. That's what it comes down to and it's not that complicated. With respect to hardwood flooring, almost anyone can design a few SKUs and find a mill in any country to produce the flooring under his or her label, or worse yet, an existing label as a private-label distributor or dealer. China, Mexico, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Guatemala or even the U.S.—it doesn't matter; buy from a reputable company.

What does it mean to buy from a hardwood flooring supplier that either fully or partially manufactures its products overseas? What does a business need to do to protect itself as a buyer, whether that business is a distributor, retailer, contractor or designer?

- Buy from a reputable company that has been in business for at least 10 years. Let it be the importer of record and purchase at a delivered price.

- Buy only CARB 2-compliant products regardless of what state in which they will be sold. Be sure to ask for pictures of the mill's packaging that shows CARB-compliant certificates and serial numbers.

- Be aware of market prices and be suspect of a new supplier that is well below the market price.

- Most important, remember this is still a people business, so buyers should do business with people they know or people who come recommended from colleagues or friends.





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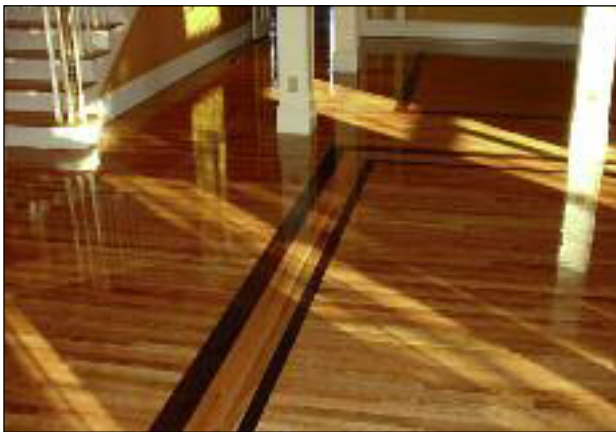


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## customization

# Out-of-the-box designs

With numerous advances in the flooring industry over the past few decades, customizing a wood floor is easier than ever. Dealers can help their customers create differentiated designs with simple upgrades, unique looks or mixed products—all at an affordable price.

### Borders

Borders create a frame effect in a room or area and usually contrast to the main part of the room. For example, a simple installation of a medium-colored wood such might include a border in a contrasting darker species. Borders can also incorporate stone, marble, brass, stainless steel, nickel and other metals.

### Medallions

Medallions are usually installed in the main field of the floor, typically in areas such as foyers. These designs can incorporate multiple wood species and other mixed products like stone, metal or leather. Factory-finished medallions can be routed into existing floors with minimal disruption.

### Hand distressing

Distressed wood offers the opportunity of one-of-a-kind designs. For those who can't find the specific look they want through digital printing, or who may want specific features in designated areas, hand distressing offers a unique and antiqued appearance that appeals to many end users.

## hardwood 101: design

# Helping customers sort through their options

BY KATIE FORD

Hard surfaces marketing director, Shaw Floors

Consumers have a wide variety of choices when it comes to flooring. In addition to understanding the various benefits of solid and engineered hardwood, staying up to speed on design trends is a key way for retailers to be trusted advisors and build a rapport that can foster sales.

Flooring selection can have a significant impact on the look and feel of any room. Hardwood floors can complement and create a wide range of styles from contemporary to classic. Gray tones, reclaimed looks, and longer and wider planks continue to be popular with consumers. Rustic and distressed hickory floors, for example, can look as if they might have been in an ancient barn or even a

long-closed factory, bringing immediate warmth and character to a home.

While the rich color and natural grain and knots that come from hickory species remain among the most sought after looks throughout the country, lighter colors with the clean visuals available in oak are becoming increasingly popular. A hot trend on the West Coast for the past few years, this style is now emerging as a preferred look on the East Coast as well.



From contemporary to classic, hardwood floors can complement and enhance a wide range of styles and preferences.

Asking a series of questions to understand where and how the flooring will be used, budget parameters and the look and feel the customer is aiming to establish can lead to a more satisfying purchase experience. Above all, it's about understanding the customer's priorities, and, as always, matching a product with her performance and design needs.

# for one-of-a-kind floors

## Painted floors

Rather than buying a colored wood, a customer might want to customize her floor in specific areas. Painted borders, for example, can transform a floor into a work of art reflecting personal style and creativity.

## Mixed materials

Retailers can create a custom floor by mixing wood with other materials such as stone, tile, slate, marble, metal and even leather. Highlighting a marble foyer with wood makes a dramatic entryway, while incorporating brushed nickel accents into a kitchen wood floor can accent appliances.

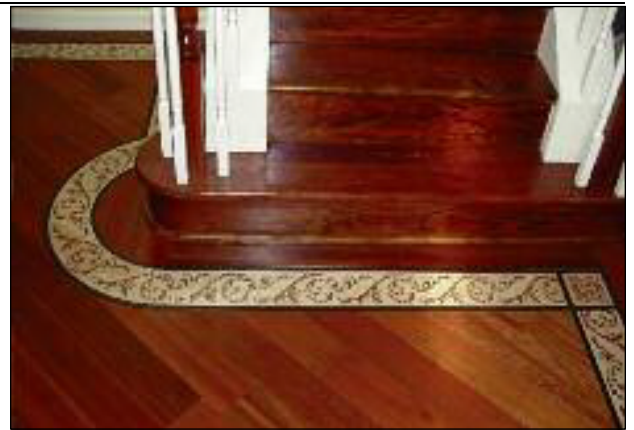
## Exotic wood

Exotic species are available in colors that can add an entirely new look to any room; carrying these species offers retailers an advantage over the big boxes. For example, Bubinga from Africa has a reddish-pink hue to enhance a room's décor.

## Staining

Retailers may want to consider offering staining as an add-on service for customers not yet in the market to replace wood floors. Dark, light or medium stains can all give floors a completely different look.

Source: National Wood Flooring Association



## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: Q-WOOD

### Style plus substance equals a winning formula

At last, the hardwood floor has evolved. The new Q-Wood assortment by Quick-Step offers engineered floors designed to fit perfectly in homes everywhere. These floors are made in the USA and crafted from North American species like oak, walnut, maple and hickory.

#### Unmatched aesthetics

Q-Wood floors come in a variety of colors and shades with three distinctive surface textures designed to complement any style. Their smooth surfaces give floors a sleek, refined finish that evenly displays the color and grain of the wood, while the soft-scraped surface options give the feel of fine, hand-tooled wood, sculpted to add dimension to any room.

#### Unsurpassed performance

Style is nothing without substance, and that is why Q-Wood engineers its floors for the ultimate in performance as well as aesthetics.

Each plank is comprised of a face veneer and back veneer sandwiched over a hardwood, multi-ply core. The faces and backs are matched to create a balanced panel that reduces warping and movement.

The Uniclic locking system means Q-Wood floors simply click together to create a tight-locking joint and easy installation. The planks can be floated over most existing floors or sub-floors and can be glued or stapled down.

Each floor in the collection is prefinished with the exclusive Oplux Performance Enhanced Finish. This coating penetrates into the wood grain, illuminating the natural elements of the wood while shielding against scratches and everyday wear. Q-Wood floors have the appearance of an oil finish with the performance comparable to a standard urethane floor. Plus,



The new Q-Wood assortment features a variety of colors and shades with three distinctive surface textures designed to complement any style.

the exclusive coating can be refreshed with Renewal Revitalizing Solution, one of the many innovations that make Q-Wood one of the most unique floors on the market today.

#### Unrivaled commitment

As a part of the Quick-Step brand family, Q-Wood's commitment to its customers goes beyond designing and engineering exceptional artisan floors. Q-Wood manufactures all of its floors to be safe for the environment both inside the home and out. The company has worked to be sure its engineered wood flooring meets or exceeds the most stringent formaldehyde emissions standards in the world for composite wood products.

Q-Wood achieved this green goal by using the patented PureBond technology in its manufacturing process. PureBond replaces the urea-formaldehyde traditionally used in the manufacturing of composite wood products. As a result, Q-Wood has eliminated formaldehyde emissions associated with adhesives in its engineered floors, secured FloorScore certification and has met stringent California Air Resource Board (CARB) requirements.



## education

# NWFACP sales advisor certification

When it comes down to buying from one retailer over another, a customer takes numerous factors into consideration. If both retailers offer great prices and a wide variety of options, what is it that helps her decide?

Studies show that salespeople are extremely influential in the purchasing decision, especially on big-ticket items such as wood flooring. The more retail sales associates know about wood flooring products and the sales process, the better equipped they are to influence potential customers.

National Wood Flooring Association Certified Professionals (NWFACP) offers a certified sales advisor program designed to provide comprehensive product knowledge, decrease claims and improve profitability.



Sales advisor certification with NWFACP includes a written exam that tests an RSA's wood flooring knowledge. To prepare for the exam, completion of an NWEA- or NWFACP-recognized sales school is required.

The written exam covers eight areas of wood flooring knowledge, including properties, characteristics and types, selling the right product for the

job, subfloors, installation techniques, identifying problems, troubleshooting, trends and maintenance. The test is administered online and results are displayed immediately upon completion.

Once certification is achieved, continuing education is required to maintain certified sales advisor status. A minimum of three continuing certification units are required annually. Credits can be earned for attending NWEA and NWFACP education programs, approved NWEA member education programs, NWEA's annual Wood Flooring Expo and NWFACP's annual symposium.

Becoming an NWFACP certified sales advisor validates an RSA's wood flooring knowledge and sales expertise. The certification will help him guide customers through each stage of their wood flooring purchase by selecting the right species, flooring type, installation method and finish to meet their lifestyles.

But the benefits from NWFACP certification don't stop there—RSAs can use the NWFACP logo on all of their promotional materials; access promotional materials to advertise their certified status; be listed on the NWEA website for consumers who are looking for certified wood flooring professionals; be recognized prominently in the NWEA annual Resource Book; prove credible to customers, industry professionals and for appearances in court, and potentially grow their careers into other facets of the wood flooring industry.

Retailers in the business of selling wood floors need to take advantage of every opportunity they get to one-up the competition; NWFACP certification can provide that edge. For more information or to learn more about the benefits of certification, visit [nwfa.org](http://nwfa.org).

## hardwood 101: selling

# Retailers still have the power to persuade

BY LUKASZ PIATEK

Vice president, sales and marketing, Elegance

Despite the rise in digital and mobile marketing in recent years, consumers still rely heavily on in-store sales associates to assist them in making purchases.

Several recent surveys support the notion that RSAs, especially those who are well trained, can persuade consumers at the store level. In fact, consumers are looking to retailers for their guidance and expertise.

According to a new report by the Luxury Institute, the majority of survey respondents revealed they do not research exactly what they want to buy before entering a store. Instead, they rely on the in-store retail experience when making purchase decisions.

Another new research report from Experticity, a retail-branding firm, confirms that empowered employees sell 87% more on the floor. The report further explains that store associates play a major role in the brick-and-mortar experience. Why? By offering customers product recommendations and guiding them through the browsing and buying journey, associates can influence sales. This is why associate training is vital to improving store sales and engagement.

RSAs are particularly important when it comes to flooring; as a purchase that takes place every seven to 10 years, their influence is even more important to the sale. A major manufacturer recently conducted a survey that found three out of four consumers rely on the expertise of dealers and will purchase products based on their recommendations.

It can be easy for RSAs, even those who are experienced, to feel a little daunted these days, with social media and other digital platforms bombarding consumers with more information than they can process. And yet, while consumers are much more knowledgeable than ever before, so are salespeople.

What does it all mean? RSAs have more power and control than they realize; much like people rely on the expertise of doctors when they go for a checkup, consumers in the market for hardwood flooring want the RSA to explain the differences between products on the showroom floor.



Consumers in the market for hardwood flooring want the RSA to explain the differences between solid and engineered.



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## Installation

# Nail down, glue down or floating?

When most people think about installing wood floors, they typically envision a hammer, nails and a lot of back-breaking work. There are, however, several options available, and choosing one will depend on the flooring used, whether it is installed above or below grade, and the subfloor material.

There are three methods used to install wood floors: nail down, glue down and floating.

### Nail down

Nailing down wood floors is the most common installation method. The process involves nailing the flooring directly to a wood subfloor. Typically, the flooring is blind nailed through the tongue so the nails are not visible after installation. This method works for solid and engineered floors, but only on wood subfloors.

Nailing schedules are critical to ensure quality installations. The National Wood Flooring Association Installation Guidelines recommend fasteners be spaced 8 to 10 inches for solid flooring, and 4 to 8 inches for engineered flooring. Using fewer

fasteners could result in cracks or squeaks, while using more could result in split tongues.

### Glue down

The glue down method involves adhering flooring to the subfloor. Adhesives work by creating a bond between the subfloor and the wood flooring through a chemical reaction process. While all adhesives work by chemically changing from a viscous liquid to a solid, they differ in the carrying agents or catalysts that activate them.

There are three types of wood flooring adhesives available today: water-based, solvent-based and moisture-curing. Because each type has different application and performance characteristics, installers will need to choose which to use based on application ease, product performance and VOC regulations. (*For more, see adhesives story on page 45.*)

### Floating

Using this method, the flooring is neither nailed



In a nail down installation, the flooring is blind nailed through the tongue so the nails are not visible.

nor glued to the subfloor but floated above it. The flooring, usually engineered, is glued or clipped to itself, tongue to groove, and at end joints. This gives the floor stability without actually fastening it to the subfloor. This installation method is ideal over existing floors such as tile, which can be difficult to remove.

Before beginning a floating installation, make sure the subfloor is dry and level, especially at any high or low spots. A moisture barrier underlayment will decrease any hollow sounding areas that could occur. The underlayment should wrap up the wall to completely encapsulate the flooring. Then, when the last board is installed, the excess should be trimmed.

The same principles apply to each method: follow manufacturer recommendations for installation, rack the wood to avoid "H" joint and stair-stepping, and allow for enough expansion area.

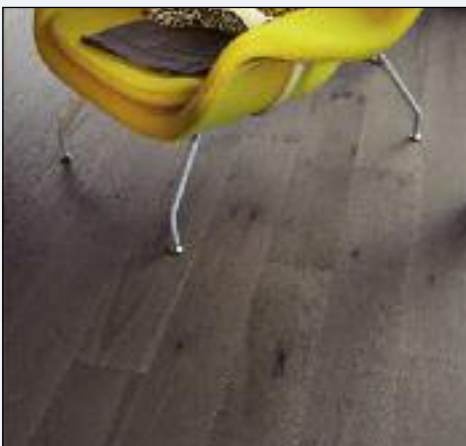
## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MIRAGE

### New DuraMatt finish gives the look of oiled hardwood floors

Mirage, a hardwood flooring brand renowned for quality, now offers DuraMatt, a finish like no other in the market, that is specially designed to provide an ultra-matte look and greater durability.

As a result of years of research and development, the new polyurethane DuraMatt finish is 20 times more resistant to wear than a conventional oil finish. It stands up to stains and scratches and provides the look of an oiled floor while offering easy maintenance features. Like other Mirage finishes, DuraMatt is hypoallergenic and free of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and formaldehyde.

At Mirage, finishes are developed with the goal of bringing out the grain of the wood while protecting the floor from wear. DuraMatt recreates the look of an oiled floor without the hassles of regular oil application. This innovative finish provides better protection for the floor's surface and comes with a 35-year warranty against finish wear—a first in the industry



The DuraMatt finish is available on all floors in Mirage's new Flair collection, including white oak.

for an oil-look finish. Mirage prides itself on being the first company to develop such an innovation.

The DuraMatt finish is available on all floors that are part of Mirage's recently introduced Flair collection, which features wide boards and wood with character. It is the third finish system developed by Boa-Franc, parent company of the Mirage brand. The others are Nanolinx, created using nanotechnology and launched in 2006; and Alumix, launched in 1999.

Mirage prefinished hardwood floors, designed and manufactured by Boa-Franc in Saint-Georges, Quebec, are synonymous with superior quality, aesthetics and durability, and guarantee product consistency, added value and lifelong good looks. Mirage epitomizes attention to detail and the desire to create a product in perfect harmony with its environment. For more than 30 years, Mirage has been committed to operating in an environmentally responsible manner in order to ensure sustainable development for current and future generations.



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Organic  
collection

Organic 567 Engineered  
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## Construction

Continued from page 4

For this reason, solid flooring is most common in areas with low humidity such as the Northeast and Midwest.

One reason people like solid hardwood floors is because they are traditional and can

be sanded many times. If they are finished on the jobsite, they are relatively easy to sand and refinish. And it is possible to achieve a true square edge profile with a sand and finish floor.

On the downside, if a solid wood floor is finished on site, it can be difficult to show a customer a true color sample. In addition, installation can take a long time as each layer

of finish must dry before the next coat.

### Engineered wood

Engineered wood consists of a range of various wood products manufactured by binding the strands, particles, fibers or veneers of wood together to form composite materials. It is used in a variety of applications, from home construction to commercial building and industrial production.

To better understand this concept, it helps to look at the basics. A tree uses its roots to take water from the ground and deliver it to the leaves using straw-like cells to move the water up the trunk. These cells get plumper when they are full of water and shrink when they are dry. Just as these cells change with moisture in a tree, they will also change with moisture within a floor. By stacking veneers with these cells facing in opposing directions, no one layer can grow or shrink too much in any direction.

Because engineered floors can handle a certain amount of moisture from the subfloor, they can be installed anywhere in the house; on, above or below grade, on concrete or plywood subfloors with glue or nails, or even by floating.

Most engineered floors are finished at the factory, so they generally have aluminum oxide in the finish. Aluminum oxide is the hardest manmade crystal in the world and therefore adds years to the finish warranty.

As for sanding and refinishing, an engineered floor can be sanded about twice depending on the thickness of the wear layer. But, the aluminum oxide makes it very difficult to actually sand off the finish.

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## installation

# Seven things you need to know about adhesives

Adhesives were first used as an installation method in the wood flooring industry more than a half century ago. The process was simply a matter of spreading the molten asphalt onto the prepared subfloor, then embedding the wood flooring into the asphalt before it began to set. The work was difficult, messy and dangerous.

Things have changed a bit since then. Today's advanced technologies make adhesives an ideal installation method for most types of wood flooring. Determining when and how to use adhesives properly will be the difference between a quality installation that will last for years and one that will cause headaches for the end user. Here are seven things to know about adhesives:

1. There are three types of wood flooring adhesives on the market today: water-based, solvent-based and moisture-curing. Because each has different application and performance characteristics, make sure to find the product that will best fit specific installation needs. Some considerations are ease of product use, product performance span and VOC regulations where the installation will occur.

2. All wood flooring adhesives require the same degree of jobsite preparation to ensure a successful installation. In fact, thorough jobsite preparation is crucial in the long-term performance of the floor and becomes even more critical if the installation will occur over concrete.

3. Make sure the wood is properly acclimated to the jobsite. While this takes place, turn your attention

to the subfloor. Make sure it is flat and cleaned thoroughly by removing anything that could negatively impact the bonding characteristics of the adhesive.

4. Be sure to use the adhesive specifically recommended by the flooring manufacturer. Different adhesives have different chemical properties, which impact the spread rate, flash time and long-term performance.

5. Be certain to use the trowel type specifically recommended by the adhesive manufac-

turer. Trowels have different teeth, different widths between teeth and different depths in the gaps between them. Both the size and shape of the trowel teeth and the notches between the

teeth will influence the effectiveness of the adhesive as they determine the spread rate.

6. As a general rule, installers should put down about as much adhesive as they can effectively work with in a 15- to

20-minute period of time. Any longer may cause the installation to fail as the bonding reaction may already have begun before the wood is installed over the adhesive.

7. Once the installation has been completed, the floor should remain untouched for at least 24 hours to allow the adhesive to cure properly. The absence of foot traffic during this process will greatly improve the long-term bonding performance of the adhesive.

Source: National Wood Flooring Association



Installers should put the adhesive down in sections. If left for too long, the bonding reaction may begin before the wood is installed over it.

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: MULLICAN

### Domestically made products provide greater quality, sustainability

Founded in 1985 in Ronceverte, W. Va., Mullican Flooring first emerged as a regional supplier of domestic hardwood flooring. Over the past three decades, the company has evolved into an international competitor with four production facilities in the U.S.

Mullican Flooring begins its manufacturing process in the Appalachian Mountains of the Eastern U.S., well known for prime, slow-growing hardwoods. These woods produce consistent grain patterns, color and durability. Harvested from sustainable forests, the lumber is shipped to one of Mullican's production plants in four states, where hundreds of solid hardwood flooring products are manufactured.

In 2012, Mullican increased its Made in the USA production by shifting a large segment of its engineered manufacturing from Asia to a new, renovated facility in Johnson City, Tenn., where the company's headquarters are also located. This increased domestic presence has given Mullican an opportunity to make its high-quality



All of Mullican's prefinished and unfinished flooring is produced in the U.S., including this hickory from its LincolnShire engineered collection.

products more readily available to the market. Consumers reap benefits beyond the price point, including reduced wait times due to increased inventory levels.

All of Mullican's prefinished and unfinished solid flooring is produced in the U.S., along with a substantial amount of its engineered floors.

With exceptional attention to detail from Mullican's quality control engineers, the processes at all production sites adhere to current regulatory and sustainability standards.

The Made in the USA movement is continuing to gain traction among retailers and consumers who are looking for products they are certain meet federal regulations and come from sustainable practices. Mullican has found that consumers in general—and its customers in particular—place a greater emphasis on buying American-made products. This is due to increased awareness about potential health issues associated with imported products that do not meet the stringent standards required in the U.S.

Ranked among the nation's top five hardwood flooring manufacturers, Mullican Flooring produces solid and engineered products that are widely recognized for distinctive visuals and lasting value. The company manufactures and sells its products via a network of 40 distributors and 5,000 retail stores across North America.



## underlayment

# The many features and benefits

For wood floors, underlayment can be more than just padding, and understanding the features that offer benefits beyond cushioning can enable retailers and installers to recommend the best fit for their customers.

First, consider the factors that play into the choice of underlayment: type of floor (solid, engineered or floating) and the performance goals for the pad as part of the floor assembly.

The composition and characteristics of underlayment vary widely. Going beyond the basics, it can include: sound abatement and reduction in sound transmission between floors; insulating qualities; compression resistance; the ability to smooth minor floor imperfections; moisture protection, and the ability to be installed over radiant heat (some actually incorporate radiant heating elements, eliminating an installation step). There are also underlayments made from eco-friendly recycled materials.

Dealers can take advantage of these multiple attributes. For example, for an installation where a new floor is replacing old vinyl asbestos tile (VAT), it can be helpful to have un-

derlayment with adequate compression resistance to properly support the floor while dispersing the impact energy of each footfall (lessening strain on knee and hip joints), and to minimize small floor imperfections. As long as the VAT is secure, using this type of underlayment can eliminate the need for a potentially hazardous tear-out that could release dangerous fibers. Or, the same type of underlayment can be glued directly over secure old vinyl composition tile, offering a smooth surface without removing the old tile and preparing the underlying subfloor.

Sound absorbing, or acoustic, underlayment quiets impact sound and inhibits noise from traveling into the room below. Acoustic underlayment is available in various materials, including polyethylene or polystyrene film, cork, rubber and fiber, and some acoustic underlayment enables engineered wood to sound more like solid wood. In multifamily housing units, acoustic underlayment must at least meet local code.

Some pads also have insulating properties. Those with an R-value of at least .5 act as a

thermal break to help keep a room warmer in winter and cooler in summer.

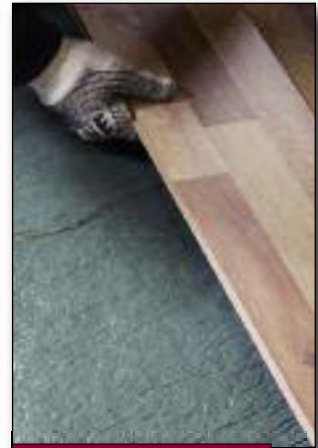
Electric radiant heat underlayment for floating wood floors can distribute quiet, clean, hypoallergenic electric heat evenly throughout

a room, providing supplemental heat overall.

Under engineered wood, padding with moisture management reduces the possibility of mold growth under the finished floor and can prevent subfloor or incidental perimeter moisture from marring the floor.

For green projects, eco-friendly underlayment without VOCs can be an easy upsell. Choose one that is third-party certified and made from recycled fibers. Incorporating this type of pad can also contribute to LEED credits.

*Reprinted with permission from Hardwood Floors magazine.*



Underlayments can provide insulation, sound abatement and moisture protection in addition to comfort.

## hardwood 101: underlayment

# Five selling points for choosing the right product

BY JACK BOESCH

Director of marketing, MP Global

What lies beneath a finished floor can have a significant impact on its long term performance. Underlayment is a very important component of any new wood floor assembly; owners, builders and developers all benefit from a good match. There are a number of selling points to share with customers.

1. Quality underlayment for wood flooring can improve comfort when walking on the floor, help with noise control within the room and down to the room below, improve the insulating value of the floor assembly, and help with moisture mitigation. These are all attributes that more than compensate for the relatively small increase in cost over a low-end, generic, off-the-shelf underlayment.

2. If installation of the wood flooring is above another room, it is particularly important to use an acoustic underlayment with strong sound-control capabilities. Acoustic underlayment is designed to absorb sound, quieting impact noise within the room and keeping noise from travelling into the room below. This type of underlayment is available in a variety of materials, including cork, rubber and fiber.




3. Underlayment for wood flooring should feature adequate uniform density and good compression resistance, which will improve performance and wearability of the floor and reduce fatigue underfoot during standing and walking (an attractive attribute in new floors for older homeowners). The underlayment should be firm enough to support the floor while also flexible enough to form around the subfloor surface roughness.

4. For projects where occupant comfort is a major consideration, an insulating underlayment that adds an R-value of at least .5 acts as a thermal break and helps keep a room warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.

5. Incorporating green building products has become a major goal of stakeholders. Therefore, hardwood flooring manufacturers and retailers are promoting products as natural and sustainable, sometimes with third-party certification of specific attributes. For customers looking for eco-friendly flooring, matching the new wood flooring with underlayment made from recycled content or from sustainable materials is a smart decision with dividends that reward buyers short and long term.

6. Lastly, be sure to consider that underlayment for wood floors is widely available in both roll-out and fold-out formats.



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## cleaning

# Repairing scratches and stains on hardwood floors

First aid for wood floors depends on the type of finish used. In the following chart, solutions in the middle column are for floors finished with wax or penetrating stains. Solutions in the right-hand column are for floors finished with polyurethane or other surface finishes.

Problem	Solution: Wax or penetrating stain	Solution: Surface finish
Scratches	Wax the affected area using a soft, clean cloth.	Repair with a touch-up kit for urethane finishes, available from any wood flooring retailer.
Dried milk or food stains	Gently rub with a damp cloth, then rub dry and wax.	Use a cleaner developed specifically for urethane finishes. For stubborn spots, scrub using the urethane cleaner and a scrub pad made for urethane floors.
Water stains or white spots	Rub the spot with #000 steel wool and wax. If this fails, lightly sand with fine sandpaper and clean the area using #00 steel wool and mineral spirits or a wood floor cleaner. Allow the floor to dry, then stain, wax and hand buff.	Follow instructions for dried milk or food stains.
Heel scuffs	Rub in a small amount of wax with fine steel wool and hand buff to a shine.	Follow instructions for dried milk or food stains.
Chewing gum, crayon or candle wax	Apply a plastic bag filled with ice until the deposit is brittle enough to crumble off. (Solvent-based wax can also be applied to loosen the deposit.) Remove crayon or candle wax by placing an ink blotter on the wax and applying a hot pressing iron to the top of the blotter.	Apply a plastic bag filled with ice on top of the deposit until it is brittle enough to crumble off. Clean the area with a product made for urethane finishes.
Oil and grease stains	First rub area with kitchen soap having a high lye content or saturate cotton with hydrogen peroxide and place over the stain. Then saturate a second layer of cotton with ammonia and place over the first. Repeat until stain is removed. Let the area dry and then hand buff.	Follow instructions for dried milk or food stains.
Dark spots and ink stains	Try the water stains or white spots treatment. If the spot remains, apply a household bleach or vinegar and allow it to soak for an hour. Rinse with a damp cloth, wipe dry and smooth with fine sandpaper. Stain, wax and hand buff.	Follow directions for dried milk or food stains.
Wax buildup	Strip the old wax away with odorless mineral spirits or a wood floor product made for stripping wax. Use cloth and fine steel wool to remove all residue. After the floor is dry, wax and buff.	Not applicable
High heel shoe dents	¼-inch spike heels will cause dents that require professional repair.	¼-inch spike heels will cause dents that require professional repair.

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: SHAW FLOORS

### Epic Plus raises the bar on advanced core technology

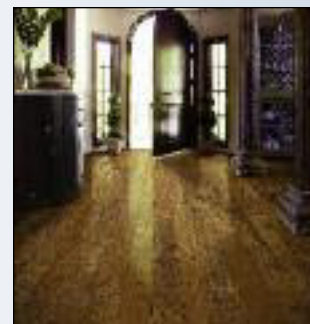
In 2006 Shaw introduced Epic, a breakthrough in engineered hardwood flooring. Epic represented the first engineered hardwood of its kind to utilize advanced core technology, giving Shaw hardwood more stability and greater performance.

Just as the successful launch of Epic changed the hardwood industry a decade ago, Shaw's latest breakthrough, Epic Plus, is impacting the industry again.

#### Product development

Shaw has remained committed to bringing its customers the most innovative technology in hardwood. To develop Epic Plus, company representatives traveled to construction sites to consult with climate specialists and premier wood and concrete scientists, testing a variety of different types of core construction. The result: Epic Plus built with Stabilitek.

Comprised of interlocking wood fibers, Shaw's Stabilitek core allows Epic Plus hardwood to expand and contract, helping floors fluctuate with the changing seasons. Glue down, float, nail or staple installation is simple with the newly designed tongue-and-groove system that ensures quick, easy installation and provides joint integrity.



The rich color, natural grain and knots that come from hickory remain popular for Shaw.

#### Fresh design

Shaw's award-winning design team has researched the latest trends in home décor and crafted a collection of 50 new Epic Plus styles set to launch this year. Featuring unique designs in oak, cherry, maple and hickory, Epic Plus introductions will include 3-, 5- and 7-inch widths to create a variety of distinctive looks.

Classic textures such as smooth, subtle scraped, heavy scraped and wire brushed will continue to be prevalent in the Epic Plus lineup. Two new textures will be featured in the summer/early fall launch: limed and etched.

Limed texture has a washed appearance that mimics reclaimed and whitewashed visuals that have been popular. Etched texture gives distinction while complementing the natural characteristics of wood. Inspired by the rhythmic line patterns found in nature, etched reveals a multifaceted visual characteristic of timeless design.

Epic Plus products are Cradle to Cradle certified Silver and meet Greenguard indoor air quality requirements.

## cleaning

# Maintaining wood floors should not be difficult

**K**eeping hardwood floors looking new is not difficult. Today's wood floors can be cared for with minimal effort, and in most cases a little preventive maintenance will keep hardwood floors attractive for years to come.

No matter the floor or the type of finished used, all hardwood floors should be cleaned regularly. Simply sweep, dust mop or vacuum the floor with the beater bar turned off to remove dirt and grit. Avoid using a wet mop as it can dull the finish or even damage the wood.

Scatter rugs should be placed at all entrances, avoiding those with rubber backs that can discolor floors. Scatter rugs will help keep dirt and other

debris from scratching a floor. Scratching can also be prevented by placing floor protector pads on the bottoms of any furniture that comes into direct contact with the floor.

Spills should be cleaned immediately with a dry or slightly damp cloth. Allowing spills to remain on the floor could damage the finish as well as the wood. Walking on floors with cleats or high heels in disrepair should be avoided. These can scratch the finish or even dent the floor.

It is important for end users to know which type of finish has been applied for other maintenance concerns. Different wood flooring finishes require different care, so proper methods must be utilized.

<b>Surface Finishes</b>	<p>Surface finishes are very popular today because they are durable, water resistant and require minimal maintenance. Surface finishes are blends of synthetic resins. These finishes most often are referred to as urethanes or polyurethanes and remain on the surface of the wood to form a protective coating. They generally are available in satin, semi-gloss and matte finishes.</p> <p>To determine if the floor has a surface finish, check the original installer or refinisher records. If those are not available, scratch the floor gently with a coin in an inconspicuous area behind a door or in a corner. If the finish flakes, it likely is a surface finish floor. Another test is to apply two drops of water in an inconspicuous area. If white spots do not appear within 10 minutes, your floor likely has a surface finish.</p>	<p><b>Cleaning</b> For surface finishes, you should use the manufacturer's recommended cleaning products. If the manufacturer is not known, use a generic hardwood floor cleaner. Never use wax-based products on a surface finish floor as it will damage the finish. Petroleum-based cleaners should be avoided on water-based finishes as well.</p>	<p><b>Spills</b> Wipe up spills immediately. Use a slightly dampened cloth and follow with the manufacturer's or a generic hardwood cleaning product.</p>	<p><b>Stains</b> For stubborn stains, lightly dampen a cloth with the manufacturer's or a generic hardwood cleaning product, and gently rub the stain. Repeat as often as necessary until the stain is removed.</p>	<p><b>Damaged Finishes</b> When the floor begins to lose its luster, you should contact a professional to refinish your floor and restore it to its original beauty.</p>
<b>Wax Finishes</b>	<p>Wax finishes soak into the pores of the wood and harden to form a protective penetrating seal. The wax gives a low-gloss satin sheen. It generally is maintained with additional thin applications of wax. Only solvent-based waxes, buffing pastes or cleaning liquids made specifically for wax-finished wood floors should be used.</p> <p>To determine if a floor has a wax finish, use a small amount of mineral spirits on a clean, white rag in an area that has not been exposed to high traffic. If a slight yellow or brown color appears on the rag, the is likely a paste wax finish on the floor. To test for acrylic waxes, mix a small amount of dish soap, ammonia and water, and place a drop of this mixture on the floor in an area that has not been exposed to high traffic. If the spot turns white, an acrylic wax finish is likely on the floor.</p>	<p><b>Cleaning</b> Follow the manufacturer's directions carefully to determine how long the cleaner should remain on the floor, and will need to apply a new coat of wax to the floor after it is cleaned.</p>	<p><b>Spills</b> Wipe up spills immediately with a dry or slightly damp cloth. If necessary, clean the area with the manufacturer's recommended cleaning product or odorless mineral spirits. If the area becomes dull, buffing may be necessary.</p>	<p><b>Stains</b> To remove white spot stains caused by water, use #000 fine steel wool and a small amount of mineral spirits. Rub gently in a circular motion until the spot is gone, then wax and buff the area.</p>	<p><b>Damaged Finishes</b> For floors that have lost their luster in heavy traffic areas, buff those areas with a polishing brush or pad. If this does not work, try waxing the areas and buffing again. To restore the finish on the entire floor, strip, sand and wax the entire area.</p>
<b>Acrylic Impregnated Finishes</b>	<p>Acrylic impregnated finishes are injected into the wood to create a super-hard, extremely durable floor. They are rarely used in residential applications. They most often are used in very high traffic areas in commercial settings such as malls and restaurants.</p> <p>To determine if a floor has an acrylic impregnated finish, pull up a floor vent and look at the side of the wood. If you can see consistent color throughout the board, it is most likely an acrylic impregnated floor. However, some species of wood will have a consistent color throughout the board and are not impregnated floors.</p>	<p><b>Cleaning</b> There are products available at retail flooring stores that can be used to clean wax floors. You will need to follow the manufacturer's directions carefully to determine how long the cleaner should remain on the floor, and will need to apply a new coat of wax to the floor after it is cleaned.</p>	<p><b>Spills</b> Wipe up spills immediately with a dry or slightly damp cloth. If necessary, clean the area with the manufacturer's recommended cleaning product or odorless mineral spirits. If the area becomes dull, buffing may be necessary.</p>	<p><b>Stains</b> To remove white spot stains caused by water, use #000 fine steel wool and a small amount of mineral spirits. Rub gently in a circular motion until the spot is gone, then wax and buff the area.</p>	<p><b>Damaged Finishes</b> For floors that have lost their luster, buff those areas with a polishing brush or pad. If this does not work, try waxing the areas and buffing again. To restore the finish on the entire floor, strip, sand and wax the entire area.</p>



## installation

# Proper method is based on subfloor, location

Most hardwood floors can be installed in a variety of methods, such as locking, glue down, nail down, staple or floating. The width, thickness and construction of hardwood boards determine how and where they can be installed.

Engineered hardwood is typically installed with glue or staples but can also be “floated” with glue. Interlocking floating engineered floors do not require glue. Solid hardwood is usually installed with nails, although a  $\frac{5}{16}$ -inch product installs with glue or staples.

Retailers and installers are encouraged to check the installation guide from vendors for specific recommendations and exceptions relative to the floor specified by the customer. Methods are chosen based on the appropriateness for subfloor and location, and do not affect the product’s long-term durability.

Sources: *Armstrong and Mannington*

## Wood flooring types: Where to use it

	Solid	Thin-Profile Solid	Engineered
<b>Board thickness</b>	$\frac{3}{4}$ -inch	$\frac{5}{16}$ -inch	$\frac{1}{4}$ -inch to $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch
<b>Board width</b>	Strips & planks	Strips & planks	Strips & planks
<b>Where installed</b>	On grade or above grade	On grade or above grade	Below grade, on grade or above grade
<b>Subfloor</b>	Wood	Wood, concrete or existing floor	Wood, concrete or existing floor
<b>How installed</b>	Nail	Staple or glue	Glue, staple <sup>(1)</sup> or float <sup>(2)</sup>

Exceptions may apply. Reference individual specifications and installation instructions.

<sup>(1)</sup> Some widths <sup>(2)</sup> Some profiles

Source: *Armstrong*

## A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR: JOHNSON HARDWOOD

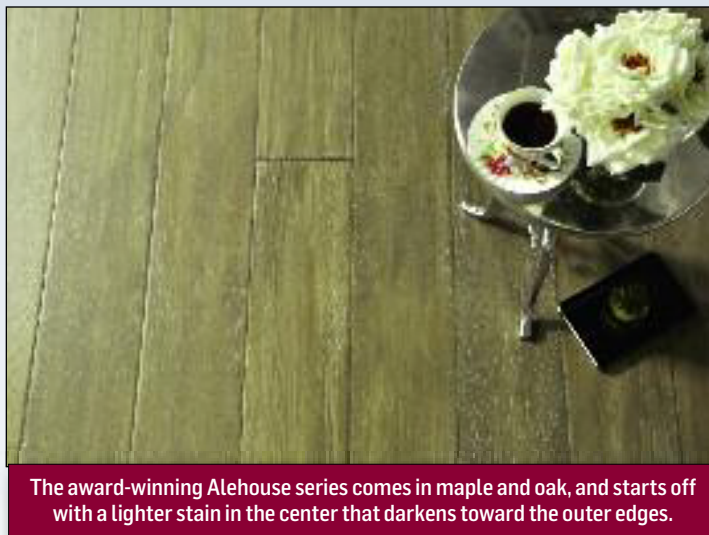
### The aged, reclaimed flooring trend

Johnson Hardwood has been in the business of prefinished hardwood flooring for 15 years. It has witnessed many trends along the way and developed some ideas that turned into popular styles.

The one trend that has become a constant is the look of a reclaimed, aged floor. After winning *Floor Covering News*’ 2015 Best of Surfaces award for Style and Design in Las Vegas, Johnson’s Alehouse line has become a solid contributor to this trend. Following the manufacturer’s popular English Pub series, which is also fashioned with the look of a reclaimed custom floor, the new Alehouse series is an eye catcher.

Alehouse comes in maple and oak, and starts off with a lighter stain color in the center that darkens toward the outer edges.

To soften the appearance, the company added a random, hand-tooled edge to each plank. The overall look of Alehouse can



The award-winning Alehouse series comes in maple and oak, and starts off with a lighter stain in the center that darkens toward the outer edges.

brighten any flooring space under multiple lighting situations. To achieve that look, Johnson was able to cultivate a staining process that makes its oak and maple boards glow. It comes from the same premise as what would be seen on traditional American-made furni-

ture. The triple-hand staining and sculpting of each plank adds depth to this line.

Alehouse has become a great accompaniment to the English Pub series, which comes in hickory and maple and offers a very solid, bold look. Introduced in 2014, its sturdy, strong appearance has been exceedingly popular among consumers.

Johnson has actually launched several product lines that resemble a reclaimed or aged floor. Working with plenty of character and truly random distressing, from wide planks to multi-width floors, Johnson has led the industry with these trends. The con-

stant is trendsetting designs and consistent manufacturing quality that affords customers a premium hardwood floor at a reasonable price.

Style, quality and value are hallmarks of what Johnson is all about.



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Porcelain - Haven



Acqua - Mix

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