



FLOOR SHOW

BY PETER LINDBLAD

In the world of wood flooring, glossy, high maintenance floors are a thing of the past. The distressed look is in and wider planks are a hit with customers.

"[Homeowners] want the worn look," says Don Carlisle, president of Carlisle Restoration Lumber. "It's like a pair of blue jeans: once you break them in, they become your favorite pants."

As technical director for the National Wood Flooring Association, Steve Seabough has his finger on the pulse of the industry. He concurs with Carlisle.

"Back in the 1980s, everything was polished," Seabough says. "But those kinds of floors are harder to take care of. You find yourself yelling at your kids not to mark up the floor. These days people want to feel comfortable in their homes and not worry about such things."

Floors provide the backdrop for the whole home so choosing your flooring wisely isn't just a practical matter; it's also an aesthetic consideration. What ever your preference, a beautiful wood floor complements any log home.

What's On The Market

There are two types of wood flooring: engineered and solid wood.

Solid wood flooring is produced in strip or plank form from 1/2" to 3/4" thicknesses and is made completely of lumber. You can buy it unfinished or refinished. Pre-finished wood flooring is sanded, stained and finished in the factory.

"The nice thing about an unfinished floor is you can sand it down and not take



off anything, and you can put another finish on and resand and do it again and again," says Joe Hammer, salesman for Bear Creek Lumber. "Sometimes with engineered floors you can't refinish, but



Launstein Hardwood Floors ensures the stability of its flooring products by kiln-drying them to ideal moisture content. The company's wide planks measure 5, 6 and 9 inches across and can be sanded down to reveal deeper tones. Flooring is also available and customers can choose from select wood species.

their products are guaranteed to last."

Solid wood floors are nailed down over a 3/4" subfloor. "If the floor is a 1/2" or thicker, it needs to be nailed down," Seabough says. There are different ways to nail flooring. Face nailing where the nail is visible, offers an antique look. Blind nailing as the term suggests, conceals the nail. Verify the subfloor's moisture level before installation.

"There should be no more than a 2 percent difference between the moisture content of the subfloor and the wood flooring," says Steve Roscoe, president and general manager of Woodland Flooring & Millwork. Otherwise, movement and squeaking results.

It's important to know what's underneath your wood floor. If there's a crawlspace, a solid wood floor needs a moisture barrier. If you have radiant heat and want a solid wood floor, go with quarter-sawn. "Quarter-sawn is a stable wide board that's not going to cup or hump in the middle," says Don Launstein, one of the owners of Launstein Hardwood Floors.

Engineered wood flooring features layers of veneer bonded to lumber

with an adhesive. It comes unfinished or pre-finished and can be nailed down or glued.

Seabough says 95 percent of the time, engineered flooring is cross-layered. Their top layer is usually made of higher-grade wood like oak or cherry, with lower grade species like birch underneath.

Produced in strip, plank and parquet form, engineered floors range from 5/16" to 5/8" in thickness. Considered more stable than solid wood flooring, engineered flooring is designed to fit over concrete surfaces and is ideal for basements and other humid climates.

Looking Good

Most importantly, consumers want wood flooring that's aseptically pleasing. Here, personal taste rules. If you're going for a more formal look, go with hardwoods. Use soft woods for a casual appearance.

Environment often determines what wood species looks best. For example, lighter woods make a room seem more open and airy, so maple is a good choice for a great room with lots of glass. In more formal settings, like dining rooms, darker woods like red oak work best, but



benefits to people with allergies. "Carpets collect dust and that's not so good for allergies," says Sarah Londerville, vice president of Manomin Resawn Timbers.

Fortunately, with wood floors cleaning is easy. Just sweep the floor with a dust mop and use a vacuum with soft bristles to keep the bevel (an angled edge) clean. "With micro bevel and V-notch edges, stuff falls out your shoes and right into the groove," says Chuck Nolan, salesman for Tommila Brothers Lumber.

Design Matters

With advances in technology come a myriad of floor pattern and styles.

Custom inlays are growing in popularity. Homeowners are putting family crest in entries and cartoon characters like snoopy in kids rooms. Medallions and marquetry are other possibilities.

"Things like custom inlay borders have picked up because of technology and the tools that are available," Seabough says. "There are more templates and nice routers and customers are just more aware of what's out there."

If decorative aren't your thing, random width wood floors provide a look that's far more ordinary. Or perhaps you're looking for a unique color for your floor. Many homeowners are opting for exotic woods that feature interesting natural colorations.

Whatever you're in the market for, wood flooring gives homes a warm feel.

"Wood floors complete a house," McKay says. "I look at it this way: You can dress up a guy in a three-piece suit, but if he has ugly shoes, it doesn't look right."



Using timbers salvaged from old buildings, Manomin Resawn Timbers makes wide plank wood flooring that highlights the wood's old patina. "The wood is really durable," says Manomin vice president Sarah Londerville. "It doesn't shrink because it's been air-dried naturally in buildings for years. And the floors are so easy to maintain. They're casual and comfortable."

may not be suitable for high traffic areas because they show wear faster.

Built To Last

A wood floor will last a lifetime. It doesn't matter if you choose hardwoods or soft woods. So, when it comes to durability, the finish is more important than the wood species. Just be sure to choose the right pigment.

"For a softer wood like pine, it's mandatory to get a casual, country look," says Ian McKay, president of K&I Flooring. "Then you can mark or mar the floor as much as you want because all those marks actually serve to beautify the floor, to give it character."

Modern in appearance and impervious to water, oil-based polyurethane and water-based polyurethane products make up most of the market. For a more traditional look use tung oils and wax with distressed wood floors.

A clean wood floor offers health