

Quick Facts – Hardwood



- Every hardwood floor has its own unique look, because every wood has its own grain.
 - Hardwood is durable, and is considered an investment. Hardwood floors last literally for decades or generations.
 - Hardwood flooring adds to the value of both new and resale homes. In one national U.S. survey, 90% of real estate agents said homes with wood floors sell faster and for more money.
 - Hardwood flooring is health- and environment friendly. Hardwood doesn't trap dust, dirt and allergens as carpeting can.
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- “Quiet” wood grains like maple add subtle detail to Modern décor without creating a lot of visual noise.
 - In a Casual décor, lighter and mid tones (such as light Oak) add texture to a room.
 - In more Traditional décor, mid and darker tones complement rich fabrics, warm lighting and elegant room details.
 - Wood flooring was first recognized as a design/décor element in 1683, when it was used in the Palace of Versailles. Only the wealthiest people could afford solid-plank floors because they were handcrafted and very expensive.
 - In the 1700s and 1800s, solid planks for floors were massive — 7/8” thick, at least 8’ long and 2-1/2” or 3-1/4” wide. Some planks were 16’ long. They had to be massive because subfloors were not used and plank ends had to be nailed to joists. Planks were often as wide as they needed to be e.g. 3”, 4” or 8”; there were no standard dimensions. The tongue and groove was planed by hand.
 - Modern, machine-made, tongue-and-groove hardwood flooring came into being in 1885 with the invention of the side matcher. This was the beginning of strip hardwood flooring.
 - Plank ends had to be nailed directly to floor joists until 1898, when the end matcher was invented.

- As cities grew in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and more and more homes were built, hardwood became increasingly popular.
- Until the start of the 20th Century, 7/8" floor planks were heavy and expensive to transport; thicknesses were slimmed to 3/16", 3/8" and 1/4" to reduce shipping costs.
- By the Roaring '20s, in the post-World War One boom, America was prospering and bungalows with Oak floors were common because everyone could afford one.
- The invention of the electric sander in the mid-1920s meant that hardwood floors could be levelled and sanded more efficiently and with better quality. Previously, floors were scraped manually by dragging scraper blades across the floor.
- The hardwood flooring industry took a tumble in the Great Depression of the 1930s. People didn't have money, fewer homes were being built, banks weren't lending money and people were generally "cocooning" with what they had and just trying to get by.
- The hardwood industry took off again with the start of World War Two because huge war-time factories were being built, with hardwood floors. Boards were often 2" x 4" or 1" x 2", and often were not tongue-and-groove side matched (which meant they could be replaced easily if they broke in the factory environment).
- The 1940s hardwood boom erupted at the end of World War Two, with a post-war building boom. Homebuilders couldn't build houses fast enough to keep up with the numbers of veterans returning home to start families and needing houses.
- In the 1940s, hardwood was still very labour-intensive. It required professional installation, sanding, and two coats of shellac and wax (used until the 1950s, when changed to lacquer and polyurethane). Hardwood floors also had to be waxed on a weekly basis.
- The demand for more houses (and more floors) faster, led to the mid-1940s development of the first engineered wood floors, including parquet and herringbone. Parquet and herringbone proved poor on both esthetics and durability because of the thinness of the wood.
- The 1950s: The final "golden age" of hardwood flooring. Hardwood was still a necessity, laid over 1" x 6" subflooring. There was still a housing boom across North America, as subdivisions sprang up everywhere. One billion feet of hardwood was being sold per year in the United States. The building boom reached its U.S. peak in 1955.
- The late 1950s and early 1960s also saw the introduction of plywood subflooring, and a shift towards the use of concrete-slab foundation construction. Hardwood couldn't be installed on concrete because of moisture; and other kinds of flooring could more easily and quickly be installed over the new plywood subfloors. Once plywood and concrete subfloors were introduced, hardwood no longer became a necessity.
- A combination of changing lifestyles, changing housing construction methods, high maintenance for hardwood, cheaper alternatives and too much job-site time for hardwood installation and finishing all contributed to the crash of the wood flooring industry in the mid-1960s.

- In 1966, the U.S. Federal Housing Authority approved carpeting as part of a 30-year mortgage. Both homeowners and homebuilders turned away from expensive, labour-intensive hardwood in favour of cheaper, easier and faster-to-install carpet. This was a major factor in the decline of the hardwood flooring industry until the mid-1980s.
- The industry bottomed out in the 1982 recession, when only 75 million board feet was shipped.
- There was renewed awareness about hardwood in the mid-1980s that helped the industry rebound. By the 1980s, wood flooring manufacturers introduced good new prefinished hardwood flooring, there were new and more stains and finishes available than before, the advent of water-based urethanes made finishing easier, and consumers had more options to choose from than ever. These include traditional hardwood, prefinished, engineered hardwood; solid floors, floating floors, nail-down and glue-down hardwood; North American hardwoods and exotic hardwoods from around the world.
- Uniclic[®] floating hardwood floors can be installed by homeowners, without the need for onsite professional installation and finishing. They can be installed over imperfect subfloors, including existing hardwood.
- Engineered floating hardwood floors look like solid-wood floors once they are installed. They offer more stability than traditional strip hardwood because they are engineered to accommodate fluctuations in temperature and humidity that can affect traditional ¾" hardwood.
- Some Uniclic[®] engineered floating hardwood floors are manufactured with bevelled edges on planks, which creates a more realistic appearance of a solid-plank floor.
- Engineered wood floors are different from laminate floors. Engineered wood floors are constructed of a hardwood veneer adhered to a core such as high-density fibreboard (HDF), and a wood veneer backing. Laminate floors contain no actual wood.