

# Hardwood Isn't Hard Any More

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Are you remodeling or perhaps building a new house and need to select new flooring? Did you know that there are tons of choices available to you in the traditional wood, as well as engineered flooring? Are you still stuck with the same old ideas with floors and didn't know that these possibilities even exist? Well, look out! There are tons of options out there for your personal tastes.

First of all, hardwood is a generic term that is associated with a wood floor but that doesn't mean it's hard in its nature. There are many woods that aren't necessarily a "hard" wood, which means that they can ding or indent easily. So, try to use the term wood flooring, instead of hardwood (I'm as guilty as can be so don't worry if you slip up; I do). Hardwood came from its association in the environment—the name for deciduous trees—but even all of those trees aren't necessarily hard in their performance in the home.

Secondly, there are also many options in the engineered woods that are made to look like the wood planks, installed similarly but are actually designed with a system designed to work on concrete slabs, such as a basement installation. Engineered floors give you the same look, give you great performance, can even give you the option of sanding it for heavy use, but it floats a bit more with the concrete floors that have unevenness and moisture issues. Installed correctly, engineered floors don't buckle. They can also be used instead of site, sand and sealed floors, too if that's what you prefer.

Now, hold on to your seat because there are many options from this point, as well. There are several widths available, there are many types of woods, there are those with visible knots (that add character), there are woods that have a lot of variation in color, there are woods that give you a clean all over look, there are hand scraped options, there are planks with a v groove on the edge, there are woods that create an interesting pattern, there are different finishes for a more satin and more glossy look, etc. You get the picture, I'm sure!

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And there is the reclaimed or recycled wood, that came from an old barn or from an old factory, or another well-used area that can create additional character for your home.

It can be mind boggling unless you start to make these decisions with your function, your look, and your design in mind. And I admit that I chose my wood floor for the character, the color and the uniqueness of it, but also because we have a Yellow Lab, Ely. His shedding hair doesn't show up nearly as much on the golden tone Hickory floors as much and they are so beautiful that they take everyone's breath away. Also, they are a nice compliment to my dark furniture tones and cabinetry throughout the house. I have a lot of black incorporated in my interiors and the black knot holes and casual appearance give our home a real comfortable feel.

Check out this "cool floor" that makes use of a different part of the tree and turns this into a fabulous pattern. You can see this up close and personal at Insidesign's showroom, in Atlanta. Tell them that "Cumby sent me!"

Remember that the maintenance of your wood floor is key for many wonderful years of wear. Several of my installation and wood resources have told me that you use a dry mop (like a microfiber type flat head that can be removed and washed on an "as needed" basis) on them for weekly maintenance, a vinegar/water solution of 1 to 3 parts if you damp mop (not saturate them), and only use a product like Bona to give the sparkle to the floor only four times a year or the wax will start to build up. Of course, these tips can vary from wood to wood, but that's the routine I use when caring for my floors, per my wood people's expertise in this area!

It's a good investment in your home and in your lifestyle to use wood flooring so choose wisely! And remember, it's a "green" product for your home.

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