

## Solid Wood

Solid wood floors have been used for centuries and never seem to lose their charm and warmth. We generally think of solid hardwood floors as a 3/4" thick plank that comes in a narrow 2 1/4" strip and has to be finished on the job-site. This is the classic hardwood strip floor.

Today, manufacturers offer solid hardwood floors in a variety of widths, thicknesses, finishes and wood species. The most common North American hardwood species used for solid wood flooring are red oak, white oak, ash and maple, walnut, but you can also get solid hardwood flooring in many exotic wood species, such as Brazilian cherry, Tiger wood, Australian cypress and many others from around the World. Red Oak is still the most popular and commonly used hardwood floor.

When we talk about unfinished wood flooring we generally think of solid wood floors. Unfinished solid oak floors come in several different qualities. These qualities are clear, select and better, #1 common, and #2 common. The clear has no visual blemishes or knots and is extremely expensive. The select and better quality has some small knots and very little dark graining, while the #1 common and #2 common have more knots and more dark graining. When buying an unfinished solid wood floor make sure you know which quality you are buying.

Solid wood planks are cut out as a solid block right from the tree. The wood blocks are then sawn into solid flooring planks with tongue and groove edges. The planks are then either pre-finished at the factory or placed into unfinished bundles of varying lengths.

All solid wood floors will react to the presence of moisture. In the winter heating months the lack of humidity can cause solid wood floors to contract which leaves unsightly gaps between each plank. In the summer months when the humidity is higher the wood planks will expand and the gapping will disappear. If there is too much moisture present the wood planks may cup or buckle. This is why it is so important to leave the proper expansion gap along all vertical walls and to acclimate the solid wood planks prior to installation. (Engineered wood planks are not nearly as affected by humidity as solid wood floors.