



There's a New
Fashion Era
For Engineered Hardwood Floors.



There have been **countless improvements** in engineered hardwood flooring since 1946 when **engineered floors** were little more than 9-inch squares of plywood milled with a tongue-and-groove.

In the years since, technological breakthroughs were achieved and new species introduced which helped this segment of the hard surface floor fashion market grow. The past decade has seen the most spectacular and dramatic changes launching engineered wood into a truly new era.

Until the advent of aluminum oxide hardwood finished in the mid 1990s, solid hardwood flooring dominated in the northern tier of the United States, due in large part to tradition and also to the prevalence of regional home construction which included basements.

The advent of aluminum oxide factory finishes changed all that. Suddenly, engineered wood floors began to appear with finish warranties of 20 years (and more!) while solid, site-finishes were limited to three years or fewer.

As sales of engineered flooring continued to grow, manufacturers of solid wood floors began pre-finishing their products with two results. First, by offering aluminum oxide finishes, they could compete with the longer engineered-finish warranties. Second, this change to pre-finished solids put them on equal footing when it came to wear characteristics.

While these changes in technology were taking place, there were also major shifts occurring in consumer hardwood fashion choices. In the mid '90s, oak species accounted for about 70 percent of all hardwood flooring sold; that figure increased to almost 90 percent when maple was added. Less than 10 years later, oak and maple still account for most of the solid hardwood sold, but engineered flooring now includes wood species from every continent of the world. There is birch from Europe, merbau and teak from Asia, exotic species from Africa and rosewoods and Brazilian cherry from South America. New species are now being introduced into the American market on what seems like a daily basis.

At nearly the same time, there was another major change in consumer preferences, led by the engineered flooring segment — the acceptance of “character” and the introduction of textures surfaces. For years, “woodies” have always appreciated what was called “character” in wood planks and strips — those wide contrasts in the color of boards caused by minerals and graining and knots by normal tree growth. While consumer demanded clean looking wood, wood lovers loved the distressed appearance of “character” woods.

This consumer trend began to change in the late '90s as wood manufacturers began to introduce more character or “distressed” selections, and American consumers lined up to buy them.

Says Don Finkell, President of Anderson Hardwood Floors, “As we entered the new millennium, we began seeing a trend toward textured products in vinyl, laminate and ceramic flooring, so it made sense for a hardwood manufacturer to introduce an engineered, textured hardwood product. Anderson did, with a hand-scraped product. Before that introduction, this look was limited almost totally to expensive, site-scraped floors. That could take weeks to complete.”

Engineered hardwood floors today are light years ahead of their 20th Century predecessors. They are available in wide and wider widths (unavailable in solid entries) and expanding texture and finish choices. With the turn of the Century, engineered hardwood flooring evolved from a commodity item to a key fashion element in the home furnishing market. 🌿