



SUMMER  
IN THE  
WOODS

## What's there not to **love** about wood floors?

They get lovelier by the years as **daily life adds character and charm**, reflective of the home's history!

**F**rom an investment perspective, real estate agents say wood floors add 10% to the selling price because of their popularity and durable good looks generation to generation. These days, it's important to know that wood flooring has insulation value, too, and saves on heating and cooling.

Wood flooring dates back to 500AD in the homes of royalty and the wealthy. Many original wood floors are still in good condition in the homes of our nation's forefathers like Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

There are all types of wood styles available — planks, 3 to 12 inches and wider, strips from 1 to 3 inches and parquet, small pieces formed together in designs and glued together, like tile, for easier installation. Styles and choices vary from more common materials such as oak, maple or pine or include what are called exotic species with new species arriving in the US every day.

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Talk about a sense of history. At left is Maison Kinsmen Chambre in larch available from retail members of The Flooring Network, and at right is Bruce® North Shore Plank Strip Vintage.



## Exotic woods can add visual interest to your house that you may have never thought possible.



What makes exotics desirable is their beauty, beginning with their richness in color and grain to their durability. Exotic woods are rich in color and patterns even if they are not stained.

Many of the exotics are harder than the traditional American oak or maple, woods such as Brazilian cherry, ebony, eucalyptus, walnut and teak. Tiete chestnut and rosewood are considerably harder.

When shopping for a wood floor, you'll hear the terms solid and engineered (for exotics, too). >>

What's not to love about hardwoods like Anderson 5-inch Elm, left, or BR-111 Brazilian Cherry, below?




### The "Green" Side of Exotics

Responsible manufacturers work to preserve and renew exotic woods as natural resources. Strictly monitored by the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Natural Resources, BR-111™, for example, promotes sustainable forest practices. Timber that is selectively harvested and inspected under government guidelines and under the principles of sustainable forest management. Trees are assessed for age and condition. Older ones are removed first, assuring that valuable resources do not waste away on the forest floor. After harvest, multiple trees are replanted as immature trees benefit from increased sunlight and water. Because of the tropical climate, reforestation occurs faster than in temperate North America.



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e x o t i c   h a r d w o o d   f l o o r i n g

What are you in the mood for? A bold kitchen in Red Oak Genua by Kahrs, left, or the unexpected intrigue of Natural Cork in a plank format, below?

Because solid wood is naturally the same wood through and through, manufacturers recommend that solid wood flooring be installed above grade where environmental conditions are more consistent. Several manufacturers now offer products for use below grade. Installation instructions must be followed to the letter for warranty purposes, however. Solid wood floors are usually nailed down although we are starting to see 'click-together' products.

Increasingly popular engineered floors can be installed almost anywhere. In engineered floors, the "face" or image layer is a select wood veneer bonded to plies of less expensive wood. This construction also calls for fewer premium trees to be used and gives the flooring tremendous strength and dimensional stability which is why it can be used below grade. An engineered floor often does not have to be nailed to the sub-floor.

With the new wear layers like aluminum oxide, pre-finished floors are better protected than by urethane used for on-site finishes. Many people don't realize that cork, a wood flooring product, has been around for a very long time and is considered one of the fastest self-renewing products for wood floors, derived from tree bark. Cork is desirable not only for its colors and textures but also for its natural insulation and water and insect repellency. There are cork floors installed over 100 years ago in public buildings such as the Library of Congress which are still in use today.

Finishing techniques continue to improve, and the addition of many new colors and patterns have given cork new life in the design community. It is wonderfully soft and warm feeling under foot. We will see bright, unusual colors for cork including pearlescent finishes by the year's end.

What kind of floor grain do you like? Typically, you'll find that graining in engineered products looks different than the same species in a solid because rotary cuts produce more open grain versus traditional, plain-sawn where grain lines run more parallel.

For the home decorator, wood floors are probably the easiest to decorate around because they offer so many possibilities for complete room makeovers, even season to season. Wider boards and planks are becoming more popular and purely up to your personal taste. When choosing a color for the floor, consider that lighter colors show less scratching and surface dust and are more contemporary. Darker colors show more scratches and surface dust but appear more formal and generally have a warmer feeling. >>



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What can you do with wood? At right is an award-winning, energetic laser-cut design (provided by Kentucky Wood Floors, installed and site-finished by Signature Floors) in a multi-species ribbon of movingue, wenge and Brazilian rosewood in a field of sapele. It was the 2005 National Wood Flooring Association's Floor of the Year in the Best Entry/Foyer category. Below, a stunning stairway with balustrades in maple, courtesy of the Hardwood Manufacturers Association, American Hardwood Information Center.



As seasons change, wood floors provide a wonderful backdrop for all types of seasonal area rugs. With darker floors consider lighter colored rugs to provide contrast and brighten the room.

So how do you spruce up your house for summer when you have wood floors? If you've had your flooring down for a number of years or if you just want a change, how about a medallion or insets? Pre-made, easy-to-install wood medallions are readily available from many manufacturers. The medallions may be all wood or a combination of wood, metals, stone or glass. This will change the entire look of your home, a new update as well as adding interest to the floor. If this is too big a change, try well-placed decos or trim pieces in the corners or a "runner look" of wood or

stone inserts down your hall. If you have carpet or rug runners in your halls, now's the time to change to lighter colors — or maybe remove them altogether!

Want to bring summer inside? How about metal plant stands in white or pastel shades with flowers from your garden? Try adding a wallpaper chair rail of flowers or geometrics that can easily be removed after the season. There is plenty of "peel-and-stick" that is really fun and easy to apply. Add some new pillows with your favorite colors. How about some summertime candles to match?

Did you take a vacation this year and wanted to take some of it home? Maybe it's time to recreate that island retreat for yourself. Think mosquito netting over your bed draped from the ceiling. White or natural netting will cool off the room and bring back that island feeling. Bring out those seashells and put them in your plants around the room.

Lighten up the room by making it less cluttered. Put away some of those silk flowers and put the live ones outside in the good weather. Put away your heavy throws or even change the accessories.

How about a fun rug or two? Your retail store has lots of what used to be called California shags in ice cream colors or a frieze in pastels. If you have a runner on your stairs, what about looking for a color that would accentuate colors from the plants in your gardens or your ground cover? 🌱

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