

Decorating Your Home

Doing Your Homework: Choosing And Installing The Right Hardwood Floor

(NAPSA)—With the mind-boggling array of hardwood flooring options available, choosing the right hardwood flooring can be daunting. Should you choose solid hardwood? Engineered? What type of installation methods should you consider?

The experts at Bruce hardwood floors, the nation's largest hardwood flooring manufacturer, suggest you start by considering your home and family.

"Some of the most important things to consider is how your family will use the space and what kind of performance you want from your floor," says Randal Weeks, product manager for Bruce. "Each wood species reacts slightly differently to a home's conditions. For example, if you prefer a floor with an antique look, you might consider a flooring product that has a rustic finish, or a softer wood like pine or larch. If you want a more contemporary feel, you might prefer a harder species like maple or merbau."

Beyond outward appearances, the construction of the flooring is important, Weeks explains. The difference between solid and engineered hardwood floors go beyond initial impressions at the store.

"Solid hardwood flooring is manufactured in strips or planks milled directly from the source hardwood," says Weeks. "Because of this construction, its graining is more distinctive and natural. Solid floors must be nailed or stapled to the subfloor and cannot be installed below grade."

Engineered hardwood floors are made in a cross-ply construction process of three or more layers of wood glued together under tremendous heat and pressure. Engineered floors are very durable and more stable than solid hardwood



When choosing a floor consider how your family will use the space.

flooring. Because they are more stable, engineered floors are often available in much wider planks than solid hardwoods, up to seven inches. This added stability also allows for more installation options—engineered hardwoods can be installed on any level of the home, including basements.

When installing a hardwood floor, keep in mind the conditions of the job site. Weeks offers these important reminders:

- In new construction, hardwood flooring should be one of the last items installed. All work involving water or moisture (plumbing, acoustical ceilings, dry wall taping, etc.) should be completed prior to wood flooring being installed.

- Below the soil line, all surfaces exposed to the ground, including the floor, must be tested for moisture.

- The installation site must have a consistent room temperature of 60-70°F for a minimum of five days prior to installation of any hardwood product.

- Flooring should be at the job site at least 72 hours prior to installation with the cartons open to allow the floor to acclimate to the conditions of the room.

Editor's Note: This article is the third in a series.