

Hardwood: There's a species for every floor

Hardwood floors have been around for centuries, but at no time have there been more species and colors from which to choose. Whether it's oak, maple, ash or newer species like Brazilian cherry, there's a hardwood flooring to complement any interior design style.

"As color and design trends in home furnishings change, preferences in wood flooring change too," says Neil Poland, vice president of sales and marketing for Harris-Tarkett, a manufacturer of hardwood flooring based in Tennessee. "By updating the species and colors we offer, manufacturers can continue to meet the growing demand for hardwood flooring with a broad range of choices that are right for today's design needs."

How do you decide what's right for you? Poland provides some direction.

Oak is by far the most popular hardwood flooring species, he says. It is plentiful, it is competitively priced, and it is available in a variety of styles — planks, strips and parquets. The open graining is strong, but not overwhelming, so it is a good background for any interior design style. In a natural tone, it complements contemporary architecture and furnishings as well as casual country looks. In a darker color, reminiscent of walnut or mahogany, it is equally at home with 18th century antiques and reproductions as with an Arts and Crafts look or your own eclectic mix.

"If a homeowner is having a hard time making a choice, he should follow the lead of millions of home buyers, home remodelers and interior designers, and choose an oak plank-type floor in a natural color," notes Poland.

Gaining in popularity, however, are floors of maple and ash. Maple features a straight graining pattern and is hard and strong. Ash is a blond wood that also is extremely hard. Both are ideal choices for flooring.

"Because they are lighter woods, these two species are often found in light or white colors," says Poland.

Brazilian cherry is one of the newest additions to Harris-Tarkett's Longstrip American Collection. With its distinct graining pattern and inherent hardness — it is more than 75 percent harder than oak — it is an elegant alternative to oak. Its pink/red color goes through the wood and darkens with age to add a warm patina to the floor. Its denseness and

hardness make it ideal for high-traffic areas, notes Poland.

"With its unique color and graining, this species is a good choice for the homeowner who wants the flooring to be an important part of the overall interior design statement," says Poland. Although its name sounds exotic, Poland confirms that the Brazilian cherry used today is harvested from controlled forests grown for this purpose.

Once you've chosen a species and color, the next decision is the type of flooring. Again, there are a number of options — prefinished or unfinished, the Longstrip type, an "engineered" plank, a solid or a parquet. Which are the top sellers?

"There's no doubt that prefinished Longstrip and the prefinished engineered floors are far and away the best sellers," says Poland.

Prefinished products offer a number of advantages. They can be installed without the dust, fumes or waiting time associated with the installation of unfinished floors. In addition, factory finishes are precisely controlled to assure a uniform thickness throughout the floor.

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view, the most versatile product is Longstrip. Produced in 8-foot planks to resemble strip flooring when installed, a Longstrip laminated floor can be installed permanently over most subfloors without the use of nails or adhesives.

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"It's great for remodeling since it's one of the few products that can be installed in an average room in a few hours. The furniture

can be put back into place and the room used immediately," Poland notes. "Engineered" is the term used to describe laminated plank and strip hardwood floors, like Harris-Tarkett's Hoiston and Jonesborough, which are available in 2½-inch strips and 3-inch wide planks. They are top-quality and provide a number of installation advantages. They are inherently stable so the floor does not expand and contract, leaving unsightly gaps between the planks. They feature Tark-Lock, proprietary milling technique that produces a precise tongue and groove for a tight fit between planks, resulting in a smooth, level flooring surface that does not trap dust and other particles.

The "engineered" manufacturing process also uses more of every log, maximizing the yield from each tree harvested. The price is very competitive when compared to solid plank and strip products, as well as when compared to other flooring materials, like vinyl or carpeting.

No matter the species, color or type, the big news is the growing use of hardwood flooring in kitchens. "The variety of colors and species give the homeowner or designer a number of choices

when mixing woods within the space using one wood for the cabinets, another for the flooring, and yet another for the dining table and chairs," notes Poland.

The real reason, however, is the advanced factory finish. For example, Harris-Tarkett puts seven coats of polyurethane on its prefinished flooring products, giving homeowners a luxurious, yet tough and durable no-wax floor.

"These finishes can stand up to whatever a cook dishes out," says Poland.

There's no doubt hardwood flooring is one of the fastest-growing segments of the flooring industry, according to Poland. "Homeowners and home buyers have discovered that it provides very good value for the price. It is luxurious, yet easy to care for, and it enhances the indoor air quality," he says. "But, most importantly, it fills the color and design needs of the homeowner or designer."

To help choose the hardwood flooring that's right for you, order Harris-Tarkett's 20-page, full-color catalog. It's free by writing to Harris-Tarkett Inc., 2225 Eddie Williams Road, Johnson City, TN 37601-2872, or calling toll-free 1-800-842-7816.

From out of the blue: emotional effects of color

(NAPS) — Feeling blue? How about red, green or orange? Whether or not we realize it, we all are affected emotionally by the colors that surround us.

Even at home, the colors we choose reflect our feelings and personalities. Colors also influence us and those who share our homes.

Color researchers have found that when test subjects are placed in red rooms, their pulses and body temperatures increase; when the same individuals are placed in blue rooms, the opposite occurs.

Other experiments have shown that violence among inmates was reduced when prison walls were painted pink,

and that children in red classrooms were more hyperactive than their peers whose classrooms were painted blue.

"Because we see colors with our hearts, not our heads, they have the power to put us in a variety of moods," says Margi Daniels, ASID, La-Z-Boy design consultant.

"So, when choosing colors for your home, choose wisely, according to a room's function and how certain colors make you and your family feel."

Following are the emotional and psychological influences of some of today's most popular color families. Use this information as a guide to determine the colors that are the best for your

home.

Red: Reds stimulate our nervous systems and increase assertiveness. They make us feel empowered and energetic; thus, reds are ideal for areas where physical activity will take place, such as a play area or workout room. Have trouble getting up in the morning? Paint the bedrooms red. Chances are you will bolt out of bed.

Orange: Like reds, orange hues are stimulating. Both color families tend to increase the appetite, which is why they're so often used in restaurant interiors. People also laugh more and are more gregarious in the presence of orange. Dinner parties will last longer and seem more interesting in a coral or light

orange dining room.

Yellow: Yellows remind us of sunshine. They can make a dark room seem bright and more cheerful. Used in a small room, yellow seems to visually expand the space.

Green: Greens remind us of gardens, fields and forests. Surrounded by them, we feel calm and refreshed. Their relaxing influence makes greens welcome in bedrooms, bathrooms and other areas where peace and tranquility are desired. Greens also help bring nature indoors, making a hot, sunny room seem cooler.

Pink: Pinks give us a sense of well-being and make us feel affectionate, congenial and positively disposed towards others. No longer relegated to little girls' bedrooms, pink and its relatives rose, mauve and blush have become popular

choices for today's social areas, such as living rooms, dining rooms and dens.

Brown: Symbolizing "down to earth," brown stabilizes, secures and supports. Browns, including beiges and taupes, are perfect for neutral territories of the home, such as kitchens or baths. They bridge together rooms, other colors and moods. They neither activate nor pacify; they blend, combine and cooperate.

Purple: This regal color inspires awe and respect. Because it has long been worn by clergy, it takes someone of high esteem to use it at home. When made lighter, it becomes more comfortable and assuring. A great color for an insomniac's bedroom, purple helps lower blood pressure and quiets these conversations with yourself that prevent you from sleeping.

Blue: The favorite color of most Americans, blue makes us think of clear skies and placid

lakes. Like green, its psychological effects are calming and soothing, so it, too, is appropriate for personal spaces where you plan to rest and relax.

"Remember, too, that color is very personal," says Daniela. "You may adore blue for its serenity, but your spouse may find it cold."

"Finding out how certain hues make you and your family feel is crucial to determining how best to color your world at home."

For more information on how to make the rooms that make a home, call 1-800-MAKE A HOME to receive a free La-Z-Boy Home Furnishings Kit.

The kit includes easy-to-follow steps for room planning and decorating, product information, definitions of common home furnishings terms, and a grid and ready-made furniture templates so you can develop your own floor plan.

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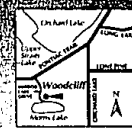


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