WOOD PROPERTY, GRADES, WIDTHS, AND CUTS

WOOD PROPERTY AND GRADES

Wood flooring is manufactured from various species of trees at different maturity levels. Many factors affect the way the finished floor will look from the specie, to the grade, to the manner in which the tree is sawn, to the width and length of the boards used. In grading wood, reference is made to both the heartwood and the sapwood. Heartwood is the older, harder, central portion of a tree. It is usually darker, denser, and more durable. Sapwood is the softer, younger, outer portion of a tree. It is more permeable, less durable, and usually lighter in color than the heartwood.

Floor grading matches flooring with similar qualities to allow the buyer to determine a consistency to products from different mills. Surface characteristics, required lengths and milling tolerances are addressed through designated grading. Grading has been established by industry associations such as the NWFA (National Wood Flooring Association), the NOFMA (National Oak Flooring Manufacturers Association) and the MFMA (Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association). Rivershores follows the following grading rules.

Unfinished Hardwoods

Grade	Appearance	Lengths
Clear	Mostly heartwood with a minimum number of character marks and discoloration, providing a uniform appearance while allowing for all heartwood natural color variations.	1-1/4' – 7'; average piece length – 3-1/2'
Select & Better (also known as First & Better for Birch and Maple)	Color variations produced by differences of natural heartwood and sapwood. Slight imperfections in milling, small tight knot every 3'; in worm holes; brown streaks should not extend the entire length.	1-1/4' – 7'; average piece length – 3'
#1 Common (Second & Better for Birch and Maple)	Prominent variations in coloration and varying characters. May contain streaks, checks, and worm or knot holes but must be sound and readily fill able. Minor imperfections in machining permitted.	1-1/4' – 7'; average piece length – 2-1/2'
#2 Common (Third & Better for Birch and Maple)	May contain natural variations of the forest product and manufacturing imperfections. This grade is suitable for homes where character marks and contrasting appearance is desired.	1-1/4' – 7'; average piece length – 2'
Shorts	Pieces 9" to 18" long are bundled together. Pieces 6" under and 3" over the nominal length may be included. Pieces average 1-1/4'.	9" – 18" average
Millrun	Contains boards of both Clear and Character grade producing a less Rustic look than Character but a real savings in price over clear. Lengths are the longest average length since no boards have been cut down in grading.	1-1/4' – 7'; average piece length – 3'

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Prefinished Hardwoods

Grade	Appearance	Lengths
Timeless	Natural tones of the sapwood with very slight variation of color in each board. Solid knots under 1/8 in. wide and mineral streaks under 2" long are acceptable. Select grade material.	Minimum length – 12"; average length between 3' and 5'.
Vintage	A #1 Common grade with longer lengths. Solid knots under 3/8" and mineral streaks are acceptable.	On average, boards are longer than the #1 Common grade.
Colonial	Unlimited defects acceptable. No warranty available on this product.	Vary in length from 6" – 24".
Millrun	A mixture of all shades of sapwood and heartwood. Small knots and mineral streaks are acceptable.	Minimum length – 12"; average length is 3'.
Selected Exotic	A mixture of heartwood and sapwood. Boards may feature contrasting shades and different markings among themselves. The color will change significantly after exposure to sunlight.	Minimum length – 12"; average length between 3' and 4'.

WOOD FLOORING WIDTHS

Wood flooring is available in a variety of widths. A standard in the industry in years past has been a 2-1/4" Red Oak floor. This flooring is common in homes 10 years or older. It is often discovered that it was carpeted over in years past. Current trends lean towards wider boards; usually from 3" to as large as 10". More standard installations involve one width for the entire floor to obtain a uniform, even appearance. Other options available are the "True Random Width" or the "Even Pattern Width".

True Random Width – This is laid with typically a 3", 4", 5", and 6" face width mix in an uneven pattern (not 3-4-5-6, 3-4-5-6). This pattern gives the look of older traditional floors and creates a very attractive floor.

Even Pattern Width – This floor is laid in equal width patterns such as 3-4-5 or 3-5-7 across the entire floor. The pattern is even and presents a very uniform and appealing floor.

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WOOD FLOORING CUTS

Wood can be cut from a log in three basic ways – plainsawn, riftsawn, and quartersawn. Each method has advantages and disadvantages.

Plainsawn – This is the most common method which involves cutting the log in a series of parallel cuts generating minimal waste. Boards will contain more variation since most of the boards have a flat-grained appearance. This also creates a less dimensionally stable product and tends to expand and contract more across the width of the boards.

Plainsawn

Quartersawn – Quartersawn boards are created by first cutting the log into quarters and then cutting parallel cuts perpendicular to the tree's rings. There is some waste with this method of cutting, but not as much as riftsawing. The grain is relatively consistent making the end product more stable. This cutting method can also create wavy grain patterns which will give the boards more character.

Quartersawn

Riftsawn – Riftsawn lumber is much more stable than plainsawn and quartersawn. Each board is cut having the same relationship to the log, and therefore every board has the same grain pattern. This allows for very stable flooring with a uniform appearance in the final product. This method of cutting creates a large amount of waste and therefore, is a more expensive product and can be more difficult obtain.

Riftsawn