

# Hardwood Flooring

BUYER'S GUIDE



...we took the guesswork out of purchasing a new hardwood floor.

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### *So you're shopping for a new hardwood floor?*

Deciding on the perfect hardwood floor for your home can be an intimidating task, because there are so many types, styles and colors to choose from. Choice is great, but too much choice leaves you wondering where to start! Well, we're here to help. We have years of experience in hardwood flooring, and have prepared this manual to help guide you through the process.

*-The Build.com Team*

### installations

Starting in Spring 2014, Build.com began offering professional installation services for all hardwood flooring we sell. This service is offered at additional cost, and is available in most markets.

#### How our installation process works:

1. Schedule your free measure and estimate with a local, authorized, independent flooring professional. Just give us 3 days and times that work for you, and we'll confirm your appointment within hours.
2. Complete your in-home consultation which includes professional measurements, a project shopping list and a detailed installation estimate.
3. Purchase your product and accessories from Build.com using the project shopping list and set your installation date once your order arrives.
4. Sit back and relax while your flooring is professionally installed to manufacturer and industry standards.



### flooring types

Build.com carries several different types and styles of flooring. The three most common hardwood flooring types are **Solid Hardwood**, **Engineered Hardwood**, and **Laminate**. There are also two relative newcomers to the hardwood flooring matrix, within in the past ten years, **Cork** flooring and **Bamboo** flooring.

#### Solid Hardwood

This is usually the most expensive option, since the entire panel is made from solid wood. Solid hardwood also must be allowed to 'float' around the edges of the room, since it is prone to expansion and it could warp if the wood does not have room to expand.

#### Engineered Hardwood

Engineered hardwood flooring is essentially a plywood, that resists warping, with 3-5 layers of lower-grade base hardwood topped by a decorative hardwood wear layer. The thickness of the wear layer determines how many times the flooring can be refinished before it needs replacement.

#### Cork and Bamboo

Cork and Bamboo are both multi-layer engineered flooring types. Bamboo flooring tends to have several alternating bamboo layers, whereas Cork, due to its softness, has an HDF layer for rigidity. These types of flooring use a floating interlock installation, and do not require nailing or gluing.

#### Laminate (Hardwood look)

Laminate flooring consists of a moisture-resistant bottom layer, an HDF (high-density fiberboard) center layer, and a thin acrylic design layer topped by a clear wear layer. Laminate flooring cannot be refinished, but replacement is simple, since the panels interlock and don't need nailing or gluing.



*Solid Hardwood (cross-section)*



*Engineered Hardwood (cross-section)*



*Cork Hardwood (cross-section)*



*Bamboo Hardwood (cross-section)*



*Laminate (cross-section)*

### acclimation

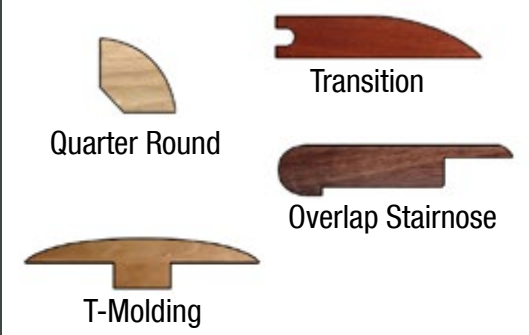
One thing to keep in mind about Hardwood Flooring is that it needs to acclimate to the room it is to be installed in. This is an easy process, and all you need to do is place the flooring in the room for a few days in advance of the installation.

This will allow the wood to swell or shrink before installation, so that it will not buckle or warp after installation.

### accessories

Once your hardwood flooring has been installed, you will need to add baseboards, transitions, stairnoses, and edge moldings to any area where the Hardwood flooring transitions into another material type.

Build.com carries a wide variety of these moldings so you can finish out your new Hardwood floor in style.



### underlayment



Hardwood flooring needs to be protected from temperature and humidity extremes in order to last. With many hardwood floor installations an additional underlayment layer, called a vapor barrier, is laid down first to protect against moisture. Refer to your flooring installation guide, or your contractor, for the correct underlayment type.

### shade and color

The color you choose for your flooring can have a dramatic impact on the appearance of your home. Most natural light-colored wood species are available in a wide variety of shades and colors, whereas natural dark species have a much narrower spectrum to choose from. In the following images, you can see just how dramatically flooring colors can change a room's appearance.

#### Light Flooring Shades

Light flooring adds a more modern appearance to your home, and visually imitates sandy soil. Light flooring can lighten dark rooms by adding indirect reflected illumination to the room's low areas. As you would expect, light flooring matches best with light decor, but the two-tone approach is also visually appealing.



#### Medium Flooring Shades

Medium shaded flooring is the traditional style, and the majority of flooring types are available in these tones and colors. Most medium shades have a yellow or red cast to the finish, which adds a visual richness and warm tones to the room. Overall this shade tends to be the best choice for eclectic decor.



#### Dark Flooring Shades

Dark flooring offers a bold appearance, and can visually darken dramatically bright rooms. Dark flooring adds visual weight to the room and mutes overbright colors due to its limited reflectivity. Visually, it gives the appearance of rich, dark soil, and it is matched best with other earthy tones.



### gloss, sheen and luster

When choosing a new hardwood floor, one of the choices you must make is surface reflectivity. Most hardwood flooring is available in four different sheens: **High-Gloss**, **Semi-Gloss**, **Satin** and **Matte**. Each finish has pros and cons, so there is no ideal finish for all occasions. The best flooring shine is the one that fits your lifestyle.

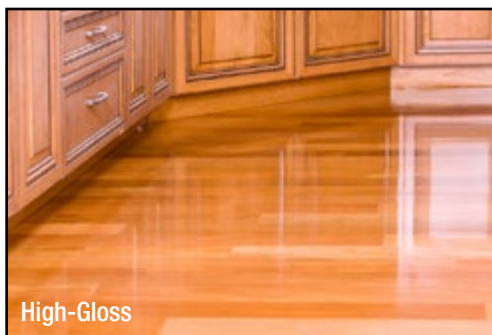
#### High-Gloss Finish

##### Pros:

- Highly reflective and mirror-like.
- Easy to clean.
- High-end and professional appearance.

##### Cons:

- Slippery when wet, and when wearing socks.
- Shows surface dirt and scuffs.
- Needs constant care to look its best.

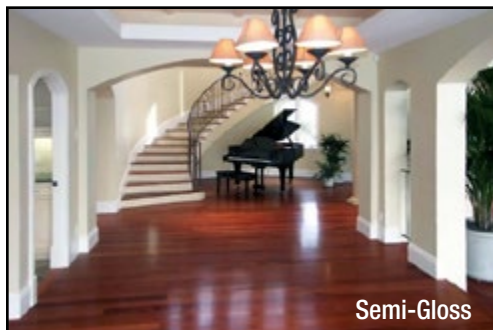


##### Pros:

- Reflective shine without constant upkeep.
- Easy to clean

##### Cons:

- Slippery when wet, and when wearing socks.
- Shows surface dirt and scuffs.
- Muted sheen that's not quite high-gloss, and not quite satin.



#### Satin and Matte Finishes

##### Pros:

- Easily hides surface imperfections and dirt.
- Relatively low maintenance compared to higher-gloss finishes.
- Subtle elegance.

##### Cons:

- Low light reflection that will darken rooms.
- Water-based floor care is not recommended.



### surface types

There are two main surface types in hardwood flooring, **Smooth** and **Hand-Scraped**. The surface you choose primarily depends on availability. Traditionally, hand-scraping was a labor-intensive process that was limited to solid plank wood, but a hand-scraped finish isn't limited to solid wood flooring anymore, since manufactured flooring can be molded into a hand-scraped surface before the wood veneer is applied.

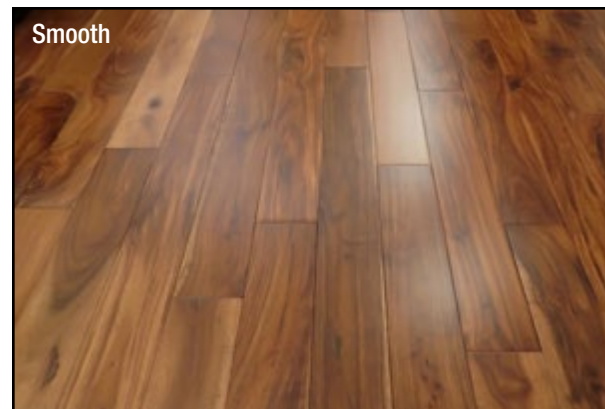
#### Hand-Scraped Surfaces

Hand scraping is a process that prematurely distresses the wood surface, and gives your floor the appearance of being very old and very worn.

Hand-scraped wood flooring is a bit harder to clean than smooth-surface floors, due to the imperfections in the wood, but the upside is that hand-scraped flooring disguises dents, dings and other blemishes that would quickly lead to a refinish for a smooth floor.



#### Smooth



#### Smooth Surfaces

Smooth-surface flooring's appearance is exactly like it sounds: smooth. This is the most common surface type we sell at Build.com.

Cleanup is relatively easy, but smooth flooring is not as forgiving when it comes to everyday wear and tear. You will notice scratches, dents and dings on a smooth floor that would have gone unnoticed on a hand-scraped floor surface.

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### edge types

Build.com carries flooring with three different edge types, **Squared Edge**, **Beveled Edge** and **Micro-Beveled Edge**. Flooring edges seem insignificant, but they can have a dramatic impact on appearance.



#### Squared Edge

Squared Edge flooring adds a contemporary feel to your floor, and has the appearance of a completely flat wood layer.



#### Beveled Edge

Beveled Edging adds a traditional 'dimensional' wood feel to your floor, and is normally combined with hand-scraped surfaces for a worn and rustic appearance.



#### Micro-Beveled Edge

Micro-Beveled-Edge flooring is a compromise for those who don't want a completely flat floor, yet also don't want the deeper grooves of a beveled edge.

### installation locations

The installation location is a critical factor in the hardwood flooring purchasing process. Different locations have varying levels of moisture and humidity in the environment, and depending on the location, your hardwood flooring options could be narrowed considerably. Always choose flooring rated for the room grade to avoid future problems, and to comply with the manufacturer's warranty. The three primary installation location options are **Above Grade**, **On Grade** and **Below Grade**.

#### Above Grade

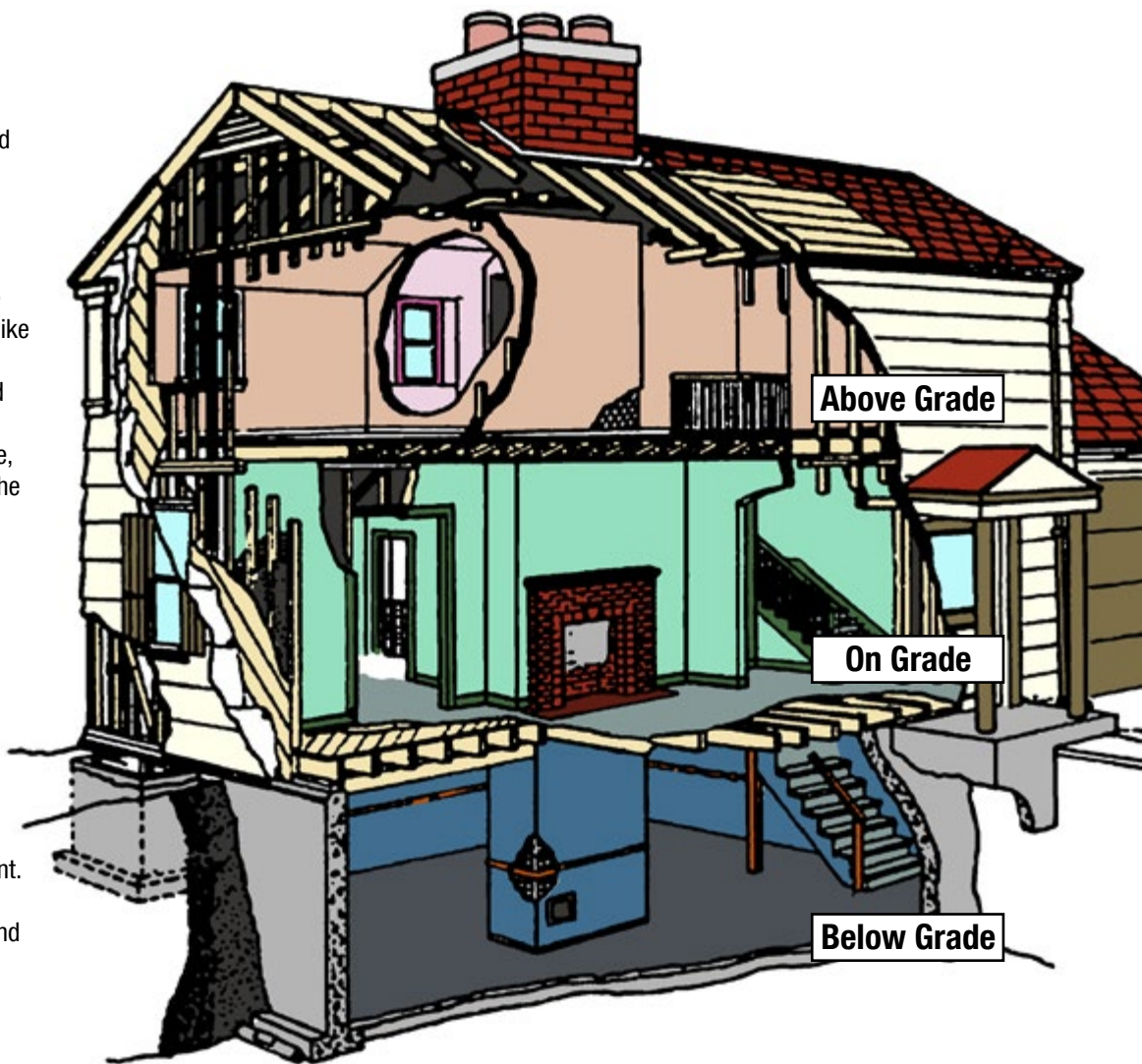
Rooms considered to be Above Grade are those that do not contact the ground surface, such as upstairs rooms.

#### On Grade

Rooms considered to be On Grade are those that contact the ground surface, like ground-floor rooms on a concrete slab floor. Extra preparation may be required to seal the floor against moisture, and some flooring types may not be suitable, depending on the moisture content of the existing floor.

#### Below Grade

Rooms considered to be Below Grade are those that penetrate the ground surface, like basements. Extra preparation will be required to seal the floor (and walls) against moisture, and some hardwood flooring types will not be suitable, due to the high moisture content of the subterranean environment. Also, flooring must have low moisture absorption qualities to resist warping and buckling.



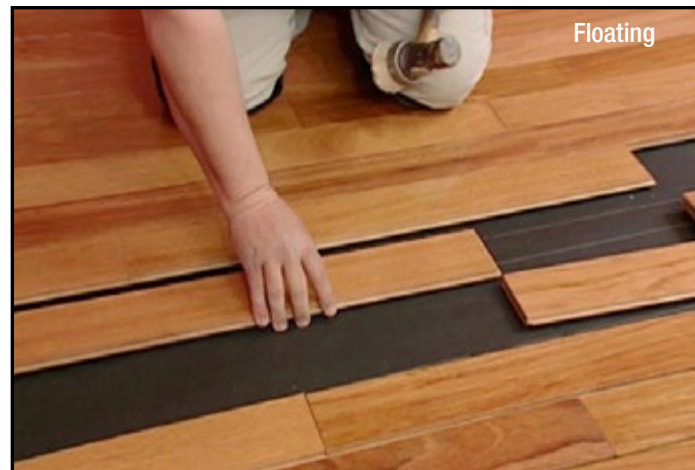
### installation types

How your flooring will be installed depends upon several factors, two of which are the type of flooring being installed, and the room it is being installed in. There are four primary installation types available for hardwood flooring: **Nail Down** installation, **Glue Down** installation, **Floating** installation and **Interlocking** installation. Some installation methods combine these installation types, depending on the width of the wood planks.



#### Nail Down

Nail-down installation attaches the flooring directly to the wooden subfloor, and is typically used for attaching solid hardwood flooring, or engineered plank flooring. For lighter flooring, such as some types of engineered hardwood, staples are used in lieu of nails. Nail down installation, of course, cannot be used on concrete slab floors.



#### Floating

Floating installation is typically performed in environments where there will be significant expansion and contraction of the floor. In a floating installation, the hardwood floor planks are attached to each other, but not the subfloor. This allows each piece to fluctuate in size independently, without warping or buckling the others.



#### Glue Down

Glue down installation is used whenever a wooden subfloor is not available, such as on a cured concrete slab. Glue is also an excellent sound deadener on wood subfloors in multi-family dwellings, like high-rise condominiums, where nails would act more like a sound conduit and transfer floor noises to the ceiling below.



#### Interlocking


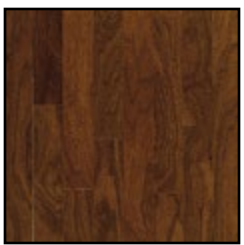
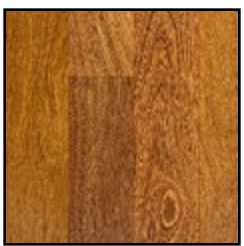
Interlocking floors were designed with the Do-It-Yourselfer in mind. Interlocking floors float, and each plank interlocks with the row behind it, so it can be placed directly over your old vinyl or tile floor. Interlocking floors expand and contract as a unit, which minimizes localized warping and buckling of the floorboards.

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### common hardwood species

<p><b>Acacia</b> (<i>Asian Walnut</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 2250 to 3120 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Southeast Asia</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>African Mahogany</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 830 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Western Africa</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Amberwood</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 2200 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: USA / Canada</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>American Cherry</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 950 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: USA</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>
<p><b>American Hickory</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 2140 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: USA</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>American Maple</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 1180 to 1440 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: USA</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>American Walnut</b> (<i>Black Walnut</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 1010 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: USA</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Angelim</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 3040 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Central America</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$</p>
<p><b>Birch</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 1120 to 1260 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Worldwide</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Brazilian Cherry</b> (<i>Jatoba</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 2820 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Brazil</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Brazilian Chestnut</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 2700 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: South America</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Brazilian Hickory</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 1570 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: South America</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$</p>
<p><b>Brazilian Oak</b> (<i>Tauari</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 1650 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: South America</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Brazilian Teak</b> (<i>Cumaru</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 3540 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Central America</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Brazilian Walnut</b> (<i>Ipe</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 3684 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Brazil</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Burmese Teak</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: 1070 psi</p> <p>Country of Origin: Southern Asia</p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>



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### common hardwood species (continued)


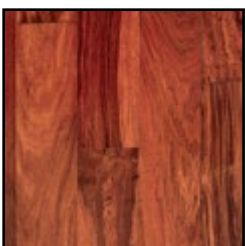
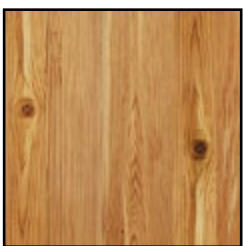
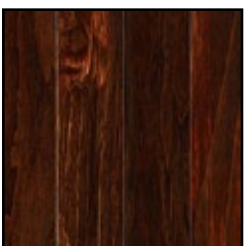





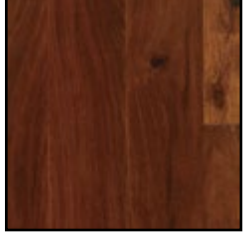
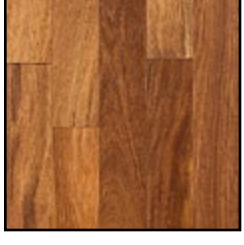
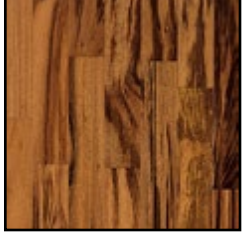
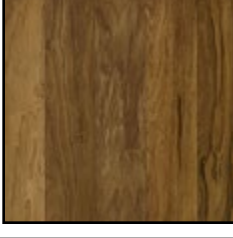

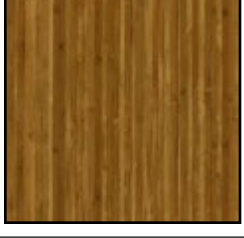
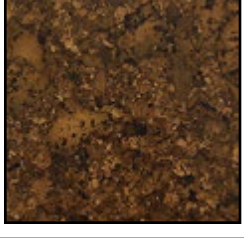
<p><b>Cumaru</b> (<i>Brazilian Teak</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>3330 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>South America</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$</p>	<p><b>Doussie</b> (<i>Azelia</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1810 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Africa</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$</p>	<p><b>Elm</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1190 to 1400 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Worldwide</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Hickory</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1820 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>USA</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>
<p><b>Ipe</b> (<i>Brazilian Walnut</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1150 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>South America</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Ironwood</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>2299 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Australia</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Jatoba</b> (<i>Brazilian Cherry</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>2690 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Central America</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Kempas</b> (<i>Guajara / Moabi</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1750 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Malaysia/Indonesia</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>
<p><b>Kupay</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>2480 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Brazil</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Manchurian Teak</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1070 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Southeast Asia</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Manchurian Walnut</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1010 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Southeast Asia</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Maple</b> (<i>Canadian Maple</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1440 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>USA / Canada</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>
<p><b>Merbau</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1840 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Southeast Asia</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$</p>	<p><b>Moabi</b> (<i>African Pearwood</i>)</p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1790 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>Equatorial Africa</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>	<p><b>Mongolian Teak</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1700 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>China</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>	<p><b>Oak</b></p>  <p>Hardness Rating: <b>1060 to 1400 psi</b></p> <p>Country of Origin: <b>USA</b></p> <p>Relative Cost: \$\$</p>

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### common hardwood species (continued)

<b>Padauk</b>  Hardness Rating: 2170 psi Country of Origin: Africa Relative Cost: \$\$\$	<b>Patagonian Rosewood (<i>Kurupay</i>)</b>  Hardness Rating: 3840 psi Country of Origin: Bolivia / Paraguay Relative Cost: \$\$	<b>Pine</b>  Hardness Rating: 1200 psi Country of Origin: Worldwide Relative Cost: \$\$\$	<b>Poplar</b>  Hardness Rating: 540 psi Country of Origin: USA Relative Cost: \$
<b>Red Oak</b>  Hardness Rating: 1220 psi Country of Origin: USA / Canada Relative Cost: \$\$	<b>Samoan Mahogany (<i>Taun</i>)</b>  Hardness Rating: 2200 psi Country of Origin: New Guinea Relative Cost: \$	<b>Santos Mahogany</b>  Hardness Rating: 2400 psi Country of Origin: Mexico Relative Cost: \$\$\$	<b>Sapelli Mahogany (<i>Sapele</i>)</b>  Hardness Rating: 1410 psi Country of Origin: Africa Relative Cost: \$
<b>Spanish Hickory</b>  Hardness Rating: 1570 psi Country of Origin: Paraguay Relative Cost: \$\$	<b>Tali</b>  Hardness Rating: 2920 psi Country of Origin: West Africa Relative Cost: \$\$	<b>Tiete Chestnut</b>  Hardness Rating: 2700 psi Country of Origin: Venezuela Relative Cost: \$\$	<b>Tigerwood</b>  Hardness Rating: 1850 psi Country of Origin: Uruguay / Paraguay Relative Cost: \$\$\$
<b>Walnut</b>  Hardness Rating: 1010 psi Country of Origin: Eastern USA Relative Cost: \$\$	<b>White Oak</b>  Hardness Rating: 1350 psi Country of Origin: Eastern USA Relative Cost: \$\$\$	<b>Bamboo</b>  Hardness Rating: 1800 psi Country of Origin: USA / China Relative Cost: \$	<b>Cork</b>  Hardness Rating: <200 psi Country of Origin: Portugal Relative Cost: \$