

HEALTHY FLOORS

When shopping around for a new floor covering, many consumers are impressed by wood's natural beauty and durability, but forget another positive aspect of wood flooring: its environmental soundness. From its sustainable source to its healthy qualities indoors, wood flooring makes a smart choice for the world's environment and the environment in your own home.

FORESTS WITH A FUTURE

Unlike most floor coverings, wood floors come from a **natural resource that is sustainable**. Long gone are the days when timber was cut down with little thought for the long-term consequences on the nation's forests. Today most timber is cut from forests that are carefully managed to ensure continued resources in the future. In fact, according to U.S. Forest Service statistics, almost twice as much hardwood timber is added every year through new growth as is harvested. Additionally, there is more standing hardwood timber today than there was 50 years ago.

Consumers who want additional reassurance that their wood floors are from sustainably managed forests can make sure their floors come from a **certified wood flooring** manufacturer. Certified manufacturers have verification from an independent agency such as Smart Wood (802/434-5491) or Scientific Certification Systems (510/832-1415) that their timber is coming from sustainably managed forests. Also, producers of bamboo flooring promote the fact that their material (technically a grass) is regenerated easily — bamboo stems mature sufficiently in four to five years to allow harvesting.

Wood floors are produced with an **efficient manufacturing** process that wastes very little material. Oftentimes, byproducts such as wood dust are used to generate heat or electricity at the flooring mill. In addition, producers of engineered wood flooring make maximum use of lumber materials by using various

grades of lumber for the different layers in the flooring.

Also available is **reclaimed or recycled wood flooring**. Instead of using the forest as a source for flooring materials, manufacturers of these products use wood salvaged from old buildings such as barns and factories, as well as lumber recovered from the bottoms of lakes and rivers.

Once in the home, wood floors not only improve the structural integrity of the building but are one of the best insulating materials, helping to conserve energy resources.

LIVING HEALTHY

The Environmental Protection Agency has said that **indoor air quality** is one of our top health threats. Installed in the home or elsewhere, wood floors help contribute to a healthy living environment. Hard-surface flooring such as hardwood floors does not trap or harbor dust mites or molds. That creates better air quality for all inhabitants, but especially for the estimated 35 million Americans who suffer from allergies.

The hard surface of wood floors also helps **avoid artificial substances** such as pesticides that can accumulate on some floor coverings. A recent EPA study found that pesticides used

in gardens and homes accumulate on floors and other surfaces in the home, but that wood floors greatly reduce the accumulation of such toxins.

Another concern for the home environment is the **off-gassing of toxins** that results from some synthetic materials. Any of these chemicals can make people in the home chronically ill.

LIFETIME FLOOR

Wood flooring is not a short-term investment. In 10 years it won't be taking up space in a landfill — rather, it may likely last the lifetime of the building it's installed in. If at some point the home owner wants to dispose of it, it's a naturally **biodegradable** product.

