

TOTAL HOME

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Fashions in flooring

Whether it's hardwood or laminate, vinyl or ceramic, berbers or cork, choosing the right floor covering can be a daunting task. Once you've found the perfect floor covering, it can add tremendous beauty and richness to your home. In some cases, it can even have a significant affect on resale values.

Hardwood flooring adds elegance and warmth to most interior decors. The term hardwood flooring actually refers to a range of flooring types that include solid wood, engineered wood and wood laminates.

Pre-finished hardwood floors are the norm nowadays, as opposed to the older finished-on-site floors. While solid wood flooring (strip, plank and parquet) remains as popular as ever, engineered wood is fast becoming a preferred alternative for certain types of installations. Engineered hardwood floors are assembled from multiple-layers of wood bonded together in a cross-grain fashion so that it won't expand or contract. The result is a floor of superior strength and dimensional stability.

Engineered wood can be installed above and below ground level and is less likely to be affected by changes in humidity. As with laminate products, many prefinished hardwood floors include aluminum oxide in the finished coats, which provides a protective outer layer to ensure longer life.

What carpets are popular these days? "Shags, friezes, hot sisals and berbers continue to be popular because they provide an attractive, low-key appearance with earthtones and blended colours," says Perry Galanis, Manager at Markville Carpet in Markham. "There is a strong demand for

berber carpets, which is a textured carpet with a looped pile construction surface. It is suitable for high traffic areas."

The traditional hard twist carpet is always popular because of its versatility and durability. These are virtually trackless carpets, which resist vacuum marks and footprints. They work well in high traffic areas such as living rooms and hallways.

An important consideration when purchasing carpet is the underpad. "Make sure that the underpad has high density," says Galanis. "A high quality underpad such as Hush Puppy offers better impact resistance."

In the past five years, laminate flooring has become a preferred substitute for natural wood, marble or granite. Constructed with a plywood base topped with a layer of veneer, laminate flooring is attractive, versatile, highly scratch-resistant and is easy to maintain. It creates a warm, inviting look for almost any room in the home, including the basement, kitchen or family room (not the bathroom).

Laminate flooring is available in a huge array of styles and colours, from natural wood grains to textured stone patterns. Textured surfaces and bevelled finishes are extremely popular.

The click system is a new installation system for laminate and engineered wood flooring. This is a unique tongue and groove profile which allows the flooring to slide, then lock together. The click system installation is up to 50% faster than a traditional, glued laminate flooring installation.

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