

Total Home

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Consider the many flooring styles and options

BY ROY GREEN

Selecting flooring that is durable, attractive and easy to maintain can be overwhelming because of the numerous good choices now available in the marketplace.

Solid wood flooring and engineered wood flooring each have many benefits which can make any decision a bit confusing. Add to that laminates in wood styles and even wood-effect vinyl and it gets even harder.

With its crisp, clean lines and elegance, solid wood flooring, the tongue-in-groove boards that have been standard for centuries, continue to be the choice for many homeowners because it increases not only the look but the value of your living space.

But more and more buyers are turning to engineered wood floors – which use a layer of real wood over structural plywood. With top layers made of hardwood and up to one-quarter-inch thick, they are a more stable product than the original hardwood.

"Engineered flooring is structurally more stable," says Jeannie Sperry of Floors Direct North in Newmarket. "It's great for condos, basements or anyplace with concrete floors. And today there are many more styles and variety."

Those seeking wider planking are also turning to engineered floors, according to Derrick Chapman of Rowan Hardwood Floors in Newmarket.

"With anything wider than six inches in solid hardwood, you're looking for trouble with moisture. A solid wood floor composed of too many wide boards may become unstable through expansion and contraction."

Engineered floors aren't subject to expansion and contrac-

tion, making them valuable in places with much moisture and in new condos. They can also be pre-cut to fit rooms precisely.

Then there are the environmental benefits. Because the top layer of an engineered floor is one-quarter-inch thick, a piece of wood that would produce one solid floorboard can yield four or more engineered boards.

Other flooring materials growing in popularity these days include bamboo, cork and even leather.

Bamboo is strong and is more durable than many other woods. It's easy to clean and is ideal for allergy sufferers because it does not harbour dust mites.

Cork provides a thermal and acoustic insulation, is comfortable to walk on and provides a unique design. It is extremely durable and recovers from marks made by furniture.

Then there is the whole world of laminates.

"If someone tells me that durability is their main concern – if they have three kids and two big dogs, for instance, I'm going to be talking to them about laminates," says Derrick Chapman.

Russ Gale, manager of Klein Horsman Carpet One in Newmarket agrees, but warns that not all laminates are created equal.

"Better quality laminates have a finish similar to wood and engineered wood and are really durable, but there are a lot of inexpensive laminates on the market today and you have to ask yourself how long they'll stand up."

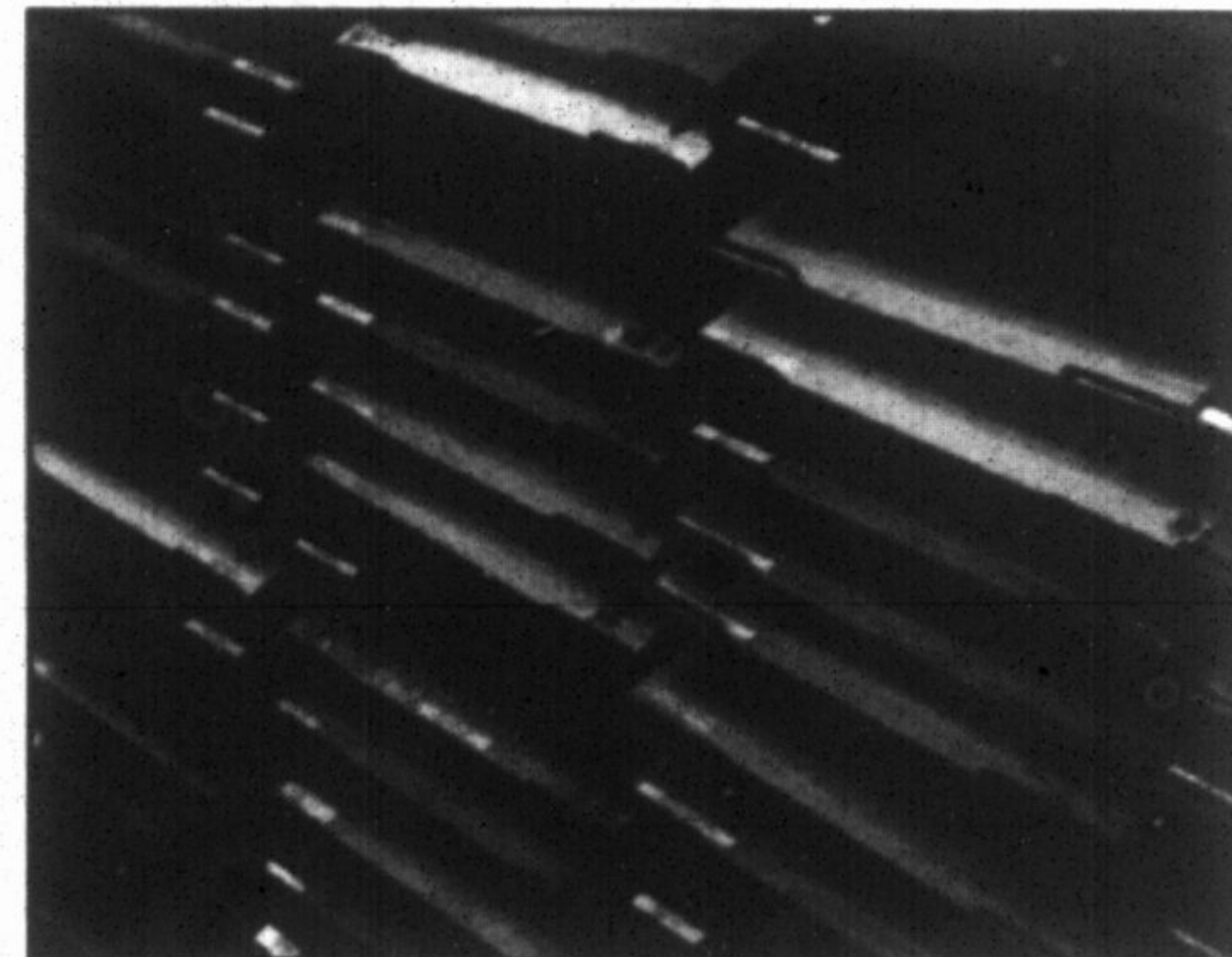
When it comes to another flooring standard – carpets – our experts are sometimes at odds.

"Carpeting is harder to maintain, it holds dirt and mois-

ture," says Elwin Bong of GreenCity Flooring in Aurora. "Most of our customers are replacing their carpets with hardwood."

But Jeannie Sperry disagrees.

"People still love that feeling of luxury under their feet, especially when they get out of bed," she says. "And with the quality of carpet fibres these days, they hold up better and you get great warranties."



Hardwood, laminates, cork, bamboo and engineered woods are among the many flooring options.

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