

## Reclaimed Hardwood Floors- Keeping it GREEN

By David Barkstedt, NWFA Certified Inspector  
Elite Consultants Inc  
(516) 887-5437  
[www.eliteconsultantsinc.com](http://www.eliteconsultantsinc.com)

Certified NOFMA & NWFA Wood Inspector

Wood floors are the healthy choice; they require fewer chemicals to clean than other floor coverings, and they don't trap dust and fumes in the fibers or grow mold in the grout. More and more people are choosing wood floors for anyone with allergies. Don't be surprised if a doctor recommends a wood floor for your spine and joints. Wood is known to give a little and can be easier on your legs and feet.

Antique and Reclaimed wood floors are an ever popular trend in flooring. Wood that is reclaimed can provide the benefits of old growth timber with the added plus so that not a single living forest tree is sacrificed. This is where living green comes into play.

Reclaimed and Antique wood can be milled to look like new, or sometimes consumers look for wood with nail holes, bolt holes, and other fastener marks which make these characteristics part of the appeal. The old lumber will have rustic character marks from many years of use and exposure to the elements.

Many of the floors come out of buildings about to be demolished or in the process of being refurbished. Antique wood flooring can be reclaimed from lumber salvaged from dismantled old barns and buildings. Antique and Distressed wood floors are prized for their beauty, stability and patina. Antique and distressed wood is usually from salvaged vintage homes, barns and structures.

A rustic wood floor will have more of the natural character such as knots,



distinct color variations, possible insect marks, surface checking and varying grain patterns. Reclaimed or Antique flooring usually comes from the old growth forests from our early American history. Today they can still be found in floors in old homes and historic structures in many parts of the country. This wood displays character unmatched by any artificial means. Wide Plank flooring can also come from newly sawn old growth lumber. The use of wider widths and longer lengths will reduce the number of end to end seams in the floor which creates a historical authentic look.

Much of this vintage recycled timber comes from old growth forest and was used to construct old buildings. This vintage lumber has unparalleled architectural quality and character, not to mention beauty.

Some antique wood flooring is sometimes called country hardwood flooring and is made from salvaged oak, maple, cherry, hickory, walnut, chestnut, white oak and other vintage reclaimed woods.

No two floors are exactly alike and usually can be found in random widths. Reclaimed hardwood flooring may contain characteristics inherent in aged wood, including cracked knots, slight surface checking, insect and nail holes, weather checking, and color variation.

Benefits of using Reclaimed and Antique wood flooring: A floor made from antique wood has Rrerrque beauty and defining character that cannot be found in newly sawn timber.

- Recycling wood is an alternative to cutting down trees. This is good for the environment.
- Reclaimed wood has been transformed by nature and time which is a link to our past. Having a piece of history in your home can be very satisfying.
- The character and patina of the wood cannot be duplicated.
- Older growth wood is denser and more dimensionally stable than new growth wood which are traits more desirable for wood flooring.
- Certain species such as American Chestnut can only be found through reclaimed wood suppliers.

**What about Antique Wood over radiant heat?**

The use of radiant heating systems is growing in popularity throughout the United States, especially under wood floors. Radiant heat is an excellent heating source. With proper acclimation and installation methods, Reclaimed and Antique wood is an exceptional choice over radiant heat.

Radiant heat is healthier for the wood than alternative heating systems. The heat is evenly distributed throughout the floor at a low temperature. Each board is exposed to the same amount of heat and does not encounter uneven drying.

Radiant heating actually replicates the natural process that antique wood has experienced. Wood that was used to support a factory, barn or building was exposed for decades to a regular increase and decrease in temperature and moisture. In some cases, the timbers from which the boards were cut have been slightly expanding and contracting for over a century in their previous installation. Radiant heat, with its low temperatures and even distribution affects the wood flooring the same way, but the impact is much less dramatic with Antique or Reclaimed wood than newly sawn wood because it has already been through this cycle for years!

### **Pricing**

Generally speaking, the price of reclaimed flooring is a bit higher. Pricing for uninstalled wood can start at \$5.95 a square foot and can top the \$22.00 mark. The price of recycled Antique and Reclaimed lumber will vary with the size, grade, length, quantity, and surface character of the material and whether the material is purchased in its existing condition or re-manufactured/milled to your specifications. The cost of recycled lumber is generally more expensive than new lumber of the like grade and size. If the lumber goes through the re-manufacturing process, it will add nominally to this cost base to offset the expense involved in cleaning, de-nailing, re-manufacturing and grading. The process of turning the reclaimed lumber into flooring can be lengthy and involves considerable time, money and expertise.

In conclusion, reclaimed wood floors are becoming increasingly popular due to some consumer interest in historic preservation and also to advance the green building design. These woods often offer superior quality from wood that grew slowly and is often more dense than faster grown wood.

Vintage and antique reclaimed wood adds to the warmth, character and atmosphere of a country home. This wood has character from abundant natural traits. Some planks are generally wider boards and have a character and charm that display an instinctive sense of harmony and spirit of country living. A feeling of history from a time when using solid wood flooring was the way a

home was built. If you already have a Reclaimed or Antique wood floor or are thinking about purchasing one, just think a little bit of American history is now or can be part of your home. What an exciting concept!

[www.eliteconsultantsinc.com](http://www.eliteconsultantsinc.com)

(845) 246-4414 or (516) 887-5437

Your Certified Hardwood Inspection Company serving the Tri-state area.