

Trim Expert

Help customers select hardwood mouldings

SSOLID HARDWOOD remains a desirable option for mouldings. But selling these high-margin beauties when you're surrounded by a wealth of less expensive substitutes requires patience and expertise.

According to Richard Kahn, sales manager for Feldman Wood Products, Garden City Park, N.Y., "The best advice to dealers wanting to promote their sales of hardwood mouldings and millwork would be that genuine

hardwood mouldings will certainly increase the value of one's home as opposed to using less expensive paint grade fingerjoint mouldings.

"In addition," he added, "less expensive hardwood mouldings such as those milled from poplar can be stained to look like more expensive woods like cherry and mahogany. There will also be fewer problems associated with staining hardwoods. When staining pine you will usually

need a wood conditioner known as 'sanding sealer' to fill the pores of the wood so that the finish will apply evenly without blotching."

For encouraging homeowners and builders to upgrade to hardwood, here are six steps suggested by the Hardwood Council:

1. Show the difference

For the first step, stress the difference between real hardwoods and the imitators. Let them know how they can be sure it's solid hardwood—make sure the grain pattern on the face of the product continues over the ends and sides.

2. Ask questions

Narrow down possible styles. Is the decor traditional or contemporary? Country or eclectic? What species appeal to them most? Will the moulding styles in various rooms be the same or different? Will they paint or stain the moulding and trim? Then show which species of wood, moulding patterns, and finishes complement their interior.

If they're just at the idea stage, suggest they look for ideas in books and magazines. They can cut out photos and articles and place them in a file for future reference.

3. Address budget concerns

If budget becomes an issue, it's possible to get the look of a more expensive hardwood, cherry for instance, by using a cherry stain on a less expensive hardwood.

Some lighter-hued, close-grained hardwoods, such as poplar or basswood, often are stained to resemble other species. This technique works



Photo by Delta Hanks, photographer, and www.ntsobigshowhouse.com

NICE COMPLEMENT: Cherry woodwork and built-ins go perfect with the maple hardwood floors.

especially well in decorative applications above eye-level—crown mouldings and recessed ceiling panels, for instance.

More functional millwork applications, such as railings, door and window trim, also present good opportunities to use a lower-cost hardwood species.

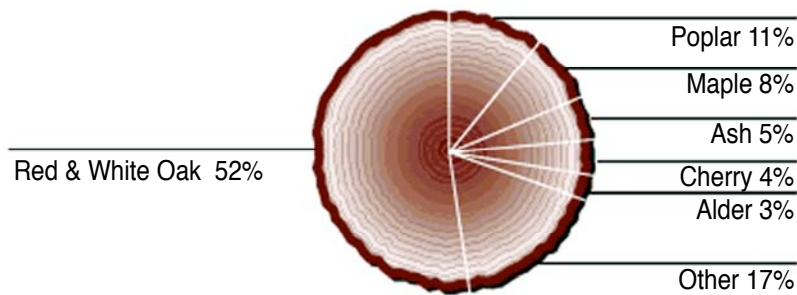
If they plan to paint the moulding and trim, suggest a lower-cost U.S. hardwood species since the paint will cover the wood anyway.

In the world of solid hardwoods, less expensive doesn't mean inferior. The cost of solid hardwoods is dependent largely on availability. In general, the more plentiful a particular hardwood species and the more abundant the harvest, the lower the cost.

4. Stain some wood samples

If they narrow their choice of wood species to two or three, they might want to have samples of the wood stained with the colors they are considering. Since their choice of species, and even the stain itself, can darken or lighten a room, they should try to view the samples at different times of the day in the true lighting conditions of their home.

Species – Percentage of Total U.S. Production



– Chart by Hardwood Council

5. Make it proportional

Make sure the moulding is appropriate for the size and scale of the room. Sell narrower mouldings for smaller rooms, wider ones for larger rooms.

Mouldings also serve a practical purpose by concealing a room's minor imperfections, such as where a wall meets a ceiling, window, door or floor.

Crown moulding in classic dentil design embodies sophistication and elegance, but generally works best in rooms where ceilings are a minimum of 8 feet high.

6. Provide samples

Customers who do their homework and don't rely on memory are usually happier with their final purchase. Show what moulding profiles you have available and hand out samples for them to take home.

It's best if they can hold each sample up in the room to get an idea of how it will look after it's installed. Perhaps they can narrow their choices to two or three and set them aside for a day or so. After some time passes, they should take another look at the samples and make a final decision.