



# Informational Bulletin #90

**Subject:** The Differences Between Northern Oak, Southern Oak, and Appalachian Oak

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In Northern America, there are more than 200 subspecies of oak. The characteristics of each are determined by Mother Nature, with the climate, soil and elevation all playing a role in the final look. These subspecies fall under three distinct species of oak which are identified by the region where the trees grow and are harvested. These species are Northern, Southern and Appalachian Oak. Let's take a look at what makes each one unique.

## Northern Oak



Northern Oak is harvested primarily in Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, Indiana and Canada's eastern provinces. The colder climate creates a slower growing season which results in tighter growth rings in the lumber. This makes the grain finer and more consistent and the color more uniform. Because of its look and because it sands and finishes better than other oaks, Northern Oak is ideal for cabinetry and is sought out by furniture makers. Although the "lower grades" of lumber 2A and 3A are used for flooring, these contain standard production grades of Select, #1, #2 and other flooring grades.

## Southern Oak

Southern Oak is harvested in Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia and southern Tennessee. The warmer climate in the south creates a longer growing season causing the trees to mature faster than those in the North. This results in more widely spaced growth rings and a less consistent grain pattern. The high mineral content in the soil causes the Southern Oaks to yield more color variation and mineral streaks. The varied character makes Southern Oak ideal for flooring and it typically easier to source.



## Appalachian Oak



Appalachian Oak is harvested primarily in central and southern parts of Kentucky, southeastern Ohio, Tennessee, West Virginia and western North Carolina. Like the Northern Oak, Appalachian Oak usually has tighter grain patterns due to cold weather and shorter growing season in the mountainous regions. Appalachian Oak has a similar look to Northern Oak but it is more widely available.

Additional information can be acquired from the manufacturer's technical department of the products used on your floor. The National Wood Floor Association (NWFA) can be an additional resource. They can be reached at 800-422-4556 or online at [www.woodfloors.org](http://www.woodfloors.org).