

Edge Grain vs Mixed Grain

Flooring typically comes as mixed grain, a combination of flat and edge grains. Edge grain is defined by the grading rules (MFMA) as 75% or more 30-90 degree vertical grain in each piece. Flat grain is not available as an optional cut but is a misnomer for mixed grain which is the production standard. Flat or mixed grain always contains some edge grain (any piece up to 74% edge grain).

It is a natural characteristic of hardwood that when it takes on moisture it will expand more along the direction of the grain than across the grain. Edge grain tends to expand and shrink more in thickness than across the width of the board. Flat grain tends to expand and contract more across the face or width of the board. There is relatively little expansion along the length of the flooring strip with either graining.

Edge grain tends to expand across the width of a board at about half the rate of flat grain when exposed to the same humidity levels. Less movement equals greater stability. Edge grain is well suited for use in those facilities that have wide swings in humidity and limited ability to control it.

