NEW BRUNSWICK FLOORING

Hardwood Flooring

Solid and engineered hardwood flooring installation, species selection, nail-down and floating methods for NB homes

21 Expert Answers from Floor IQ

newbrunswickflooring.com/construction-brain

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Q1

What hardwood species grown in the Maritimes are available as locally sourced flooring in New Brunswick?

New Brunswick has excellent locally sourced hardwood flooring options, with red oak, white oak, yellow birch, and sugar maple being the most readily available species from Maritime forests.

The Maritime provinces, including New Brunswick, have a rich hardwood forest resource that supports a small but quality local flooring industry. **Red oak** is the most common locally sourced option — NB's Acadian forest produces beautiful red oak with tight, consistent grain patterns. Local mills in the Saint John River valley and Miramichi regions process red oak into 2¼-inch and 3¼-inch strip flooring, typically unfinished so you can choose your stain and polyurethane finish to match your home's style.

Yellow birch is another excellent Maritime species available locally. NB yellow birch has a light, creamy colour with subtle grain that takes stain beautifully. It's slightly harder than red oak, making it ideal for high-traffic areas. **Sugar maple** (hard maple) is less common but available from some NB mills — it's the hardest of the local species and creates stunning floors with its fine, uniform grain. **White oak** grows in southern NB and is increasingly popular for its durability and distinctive ray patterns, though it's less available than red oak from local sources.

American beech grows throughout NB's forests but is rarely processed into flooring locally due to its tendency to move significantly with humidity changes — particularly problematic given our Maritime climate swings. Most local mills focus on the more stable oak, birch, and maple species.

Sourcing locally milled hardwood typically costs $4-$7 per square foot for unfinished planks, compared to $5-$8 for comparable imported species. The main advantages are supporting the local economy, reducing transportation costs, and getting wood that's already acclimated to Maritime humidity conditions. However, local mills often have limited inventory and longer lead times than national suppliers, especially for wider plank widths or specific grades.

Local sawmills and flooring suppliers in Fredericton, Miramichi, and the Saint John area can connect you with NB-grown hardwood flooring. Some mills will custom-mill planks to your specifications if you're planning a larger installation. The wood quality is excellent — NB's slower-growing hardwoods develop tight grain patterns that are often superior to faster-growing trees from warmer climates.

Keep in mind that locally sourced hardwood still requires the same **humidity control** as any solid hardwood in NB homes. Even though the wood grew in our climate, once it's kiln-dried and installed indoors, it will respond to your home's seasonal humidity swings just like imported hardwood. Plan for whole-home humidification during heating season to prevent winter gapping.

Need help finding a professional flooring installer familiar with locally sourced Maritime hardwood? New Brunswick Flooring can match you with contractors who have experience with regional species and understand the specific characteristics of NB-grown lumber.

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Q2

What is the best type of hardwood flooring for New Brunswick's humid Maritime climate?

Engineered hardwood is the best type of hardwood flooring for New Brunswick's Maritime climate, and it is not a close contest. The cross-layered plywood core of engineered hardwood resists the expansion and contraction that NB's extreme seasonal humidity swings impose on solid wood, giving you the beauty of real hardwood with far better dimensional stability.

New Brunswick homes routinely experience a 30-50% relative humidity swing between winter and summer. From October through April, forced-air heating drops indoor humidity to 20-30% RH, causing wood to shrink. From June through September, Maritime humidity can push indoor levels above 65%, causing wood to expand. Solid hardwood reacts dramatically to these swings — gapping in winter, cupping in summer — while engineered hardwood's layered construction constrains that movement to a fraction of what solid planks experience.

White oak is the strongest species choice for NB conditions. White oak has a naturally closed grain structure that resists moisture absorption better than red oak, maple, or birch. It also takes stain beautifully and is available in a wide range of finishes from natural blonde to deep espresso. Hickory is another excellent performer if you prefer a more rustic, character-rich look — its density and hardness make it extremely resilient to both wear and moisture movement.

For the finish, choose a **factory-finished engineered hardwood with an aluminum oxide or UV-cured urethane topcoat**. Factory finishes are applied in controlled conditions and are more durable and moisture-resistant than site-applied polyurethane. A quality factory finish also means no sanding dust, no fumes, and no 3-5 day drying period in your home.

Plank width matters in NB. Wider planks (5 inches and above) show more movement than narrower boards. If you love the look of wide planks, engineered hardwood handles them beautifully — but avoid wide-plank solid hardwood in NB unless you are committed to running a whole-home humidifier year-round. A 5-inch engineered white oak plank is the sweet spot for most NB homeowners: wide enough to look modern and elegant, stable enough to handle Maritime humidity.

Expect to pay **$6-$14 per square foot fully installed** for quality engineered hardwood in New Brunswick, depending on species, plank width, and finish grade. A typical 1,000 square foot main floor runs $8,000-$15,000 total. NB installation costs run approximately 10-15% below the national average, so you get excellent value compared to Ontario or BC pricing.

Practical tips for NB homeowners: Maintain indoor humidity between 35-55% RH year-round using a humidifier in winter and a dehumidifier or air conditioning in summer. Acclimate your flooring in the room where it will be installed for at least 5-7 days before installation. And always hire a professional installer — engineered hardwood can be nailed, glued, or floated, and choosing the right method for your subfloor and conditions requires experience. Get matched with a flooring professional for a free estimate through New Brunswick Flooring.

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Q3

Should I choose solid or engineered hardwood for my Moncton home?

For a Moncton home, engineered hardwood is the smarter choice in almost every scenario. Moncton sits in the Petitcodiac River valley with proximity to both the Bay of Fundy and the Northumberland Strait, giving it some of the most pronounced humidity swings in the province. Engineered hardwood's cross-layered construction handles those swings far better than solid wood.

The core issue is dimensional stability. Moncton homes typically see indoor humidity drop to 20-30% RH during the long heating season (October through April) and climb above 60% during humid Maritime summers. Solid hardwood expands and contracts significantly across that range — you will see gaps between planks every winter and risk cupping every summer unless you maintain extremely tight humidity control. Engineered hardwood moves a fraction as much because its plywood or HDF core constrains the natural wood top layer.

Where solid hardwood still makes sense: If you are building or renovating a Moncton home with a whole-home humidifier, central air conditioning, and you are committed to maintaining 35-50% RH year-round, solid hardwood can perform beautifully. Solid hardwood also has the advantage of being refinished 4-6 times over its 50-100 year lifespan, compared to 1-3 refinishes for engineered (depending on the wear layer thickness). If you want a floor that will last multiple generations and you are willing to invest in climate control, solid hardwood is a legitimate choice.

Where engineered hardwood wins: On concrete subfloors (it can be glued directly), over radiant heat (its stability handles temperature changes), in open-concept layouts where wide planks look best (less movement), and in any Moncton home without robust humidity control. Engineered hardwood is also the only hardwood option for below-grade installations.

Pricing in the Moncton market is comparable for both options. **Solid hardwood runs $8-$14 per square foot fully installed**, while **engineered hardwood runs $6-$14 per square foot fully installed** — the range depends on species, plank width, and finish quality. Installation labour in the greater Moncton area typically runs $3-$6/sq ft for nail-down solid and $2-$5/sq ft for engineered, so the total project cost is often similar.

My recommendation for most Moncton homeowners: Choose engineered hardwood with a 4mm or thicker wear layer in white oak or red oak, factory-finished with a durable topcoat. This gives you the look and feel of real hardwood, the option to refinish once or twice down the road, and the peace of mind that your floors will not gap, cup, or buckle through Moncton's seasonal humidity cycles. Pair it with a quality underlayment with a built-in vapour barrier if floating, or have it professionally glued or nailed depending on your subfloor type.

Always get at least three quotes from local installers — Moncton flooring prices vary 25-40% between contractors for identical scope. New Brunswick Flooring can match you with local professionals for free estimates on your project.

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Q4

How long does hardwood flooring need to acclimate before installation in a New Brunswick home?

Hardwood flooring should acclimate in your New Brunswick home for a minimum of 5-10 days before installation, and in some cases up to 14 days. This is not optional — skipping or shortening acclimation is the single most common cause of hardwood flooring failure in the province, and NB's Maritime climate makes it even more critical than in drier inland regions.

Acclimation means bringing your hardwood flooring to moisture equilibrium with the environment where it will live permanently. Wood is hygroscopic — it constantly absorbs and releases moisture to match its surroundings. When hardwood arrives at your home, it may have been stored in a warehouse, transported in an unheated truck, or manufactured in a climate very different from your living space. If you install it before it reaches equilibrium, the wood will continue to adjust after installation, causing gaps, cupping, buckling, or squeaking that could have been entirely avoided.

The NB-specific challenge is that our Maritime humidity levels are higher and more variable than what most hardwood manufacturers calibrate for. Wood shipped from central Canadian or American mills is often dried to 6-8% moisture content, while a New Brunswick home in summer may have conditions that push wood toward 9-12% MC. If you install that dry wood and it absorbs Maritime moisture, it expands — potentially dramatically. Conversely, installing in late fall when your home is already dry and the wood arrived during humid conditions means the wood will shrink as your furnace drops indoor humidity through winter.

How to Acclimate Properly

Open all boxes and spread the planks in the room where they will be installed — do not leave them stacked in sealed cartons. The wood needs air circulation on all sides to reach equilibrium. Your home's HVAC system should be running at normal living conditions during the entire acclimation period: heat on if it is heating season, AC or dehumidifier running if it is summer. The goal is to match installation conditions to year-round living conditions.

Use a **pin-type moisture metre** to check the wood's moisture content and compare it to your subfloor. The difference between the hardwood and the wood subfloor should be no more than 2-4% moisture content. For concrete subfloors, perform a calcium chloride or relative humidity probe test — concrete should read below 3 lbs/1,000 sq ft/24 hrs (calcium chloride) or below 75% RH (in-situ probe) before proceeding.

Timing matters in NB. The best seasons to install hardwood in New Brunswick are **late fall (October-November)** and **early spring (late March-April)**, when indoor humidity is moderate and your HVAC system is maintaining stable conditions. Avoid installing during the peak of winter drying (January-February) when humidity may be at its

lowest, or during the height of summer humidity (July-August) when moisture content is at its peak. Installing at either extreme means the wood has the maximum distance to travel in the opposite direction.

A professional installer will always verify moisture content with a metre before beginning work. If yours does not, ask why. This simple step, combined with proper acclimation, is the difference between a hardwood floor that performs beautifully for decades and one that develops problems within the first year.

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Q5

What hardwood species are most popular for homes in Fredericton and Saint John?

Red oak and white oak dominate the hardwood flooring market in both Fredericton and Saint John, accounting for the majority of residential installations across the province. These domestic species are readily available from regional suppliers, competitively priced, and perform well in New Brunswick's Maritime climate when properly installed and maintained.

Red oak has been the traditional favourite in NB homes for decades. It has a warm, prominent grain pattern with pinkish-brown tones that complement both traditional and transitional interiors. Red oak is a Janka hardness of 1,290 — durable enough for busy family homes — and it takes stain well, so you can achieve anything from a natural honey tone to a dark espresso finish. In Fredericton's older neighbourhoods like Waterloo Row or the University district, you will find original red oak floors in homes dating back 80-100 years that are still going strong after multiple refinishes.

White oak has surged in popularity over the past several years, driven by the trend toward wider planks with natural or light finishes. White oak has a tighter, more subtle grain than red oak, a slightly higher Janka hardness (1,360), and a naturally warmer, golden-brown tone. The key advantage for NB homeowners is that white oak has a **closed grain structure** — its pores are naturally sealed by tyloses, making it more resistant to moisture absorption than red oak. This is a meaningful benefit in our Maritime humidity environment.

Maple is the third most popular choice, especially in Saint John where contemporary and modern interior styles have a strong following. Hard maple (Janka 1,450) is extremely durable with a clean, light appearance and subtle grain. It does not take dark stain as evenly as oak, so it is best suited for natural, blonde, or light grey finishes. Maple's density makes it an excellent performer in high-traffic areas.

Birch rounds out the top domestic species. Yellow birch (Janka 1,260) offers a warm, honey-toned look with fine grain and is slightly more affordable than oak in the NB market. It is a solid choice for bedrooms and dining rooms where the traffic is moderate.

Pricing for these species in the Fredericton and Saint John markets runs **$5-$8 per square foot for materials** (solid) and **$4-$9 per square foot** (engineered), with installation adding **$3-$6/sq ft for nail-down** and **$2-$5/sq ft for engineered floating or glue-down**. A typical 1,000 square foot main floor installation runs $8,000-$15,000 total depending on species and grade.

For both cities, my recommendation is engineered white oak in a 5-inch plank width. Fredericton sits in the Saint John River valley where morning fog and spring flooding elevate ground moisture, and Saint John's coastal location brings persistent Maritime humidity and salt air. Engineered construction handles these conditions with less movement than solid planks. White oak's closed grain adds an extra layer of moisture resistance. And the aesthetic is timeless — it looks equally at home in a century-old Fredericton heritage property and a new build in Saint John's east side developments.

Always hire a professional for hardwood installation — proper nail spacing, expansion gaps, and moisture management require experience. Browse flooring contractors in your area through the New Brunswick Construction Network directory at newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com/directory?trade=flooring.

Q6

Can I install solid hardwood flooring in my New Brunswick basement?

No — solid hardwood should never be installed in a New Brunswick basement. This is one of the firmest rules in flooring, and NB's Maritime climate makes it even more absolute than in drier provinces. The combination of

below-grade moisture migration and our high water table creates conditions that will damage solid hardwood regardless of the precautions you take.

The fundamental problem is that concrete basement slabs in New Brunswick continuously release moisture vapour from below. The Maritime water table sits close to the surface in many NB communities, and this moisture migrates upward through the concrete as water vapour — a process that never stops, even in slabs that appear completely dry to the touch. Solid hardwood absorbs this moisture from below while being exposed to your home's conditioned air above, creating an uneven moisture profile through the plank that leads to cupping (edges rising higher than the centre), warping, and eventually rot.

NB's seasonal patterns make the problem worse. During spring snowmelt (April through June), the water table rises across the province, temporarily increasing moisture vapour transmission through basement slabs. This is the highest-risk period for any moisture-sensitive flooring in an NB basement. Even if your floor survives the first winter, the spring moisture surge often triggers the first visible damage.

What you should install instead:

Luxury vinyl plank (LVP) is the top recommendation for NB basements. Quality SPC-core LVP is 100% waterproof, dimensionally stable, and looks remarkably like real hardwood. It handles moisture migration, minor flooding, and NB's humidity swings without any degradation. Expect to pay **$5-$12 per square foot fully installed** for quality LVP.

Engineered hardwood is a viable option if you want real wood in your basement, but with important caveats. Choose an engineered product with a plywood core (not HDF, which swells with moisture), install it as a floating floor over a quality underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier, and ensure your basement slab passes moisture testing first. A calcium chloride test should read below 3 lbs/1,000 sq ft/24 hrs, or a relative humidity probe should read below 75% RH. Even with engineered hardwood, a **dimpled drainage membrane** ($1.50-$3.00/sq ft) beneath the underlayment provides an additional safety margin by creating an air gap between the concrete and your flooring assembly.

Carpet tiles with moisture-resistant backing are another practical basement option at **$3-$6 per square foot** for materials. They are warm underfoot, modular (you can replace individual tiles if needed), and handle NB basement conditions well.

Before installing any flooring in your NB basement, invest $50-$150 in professional moisture testing. Schedule basement flooring projects for **late summer through fall** when soil moisture is at its lowest. And if your basement has any history of water intrusion — even minor dampness along walls during spring — address those issues with exterior grading, weeping tile, or interior waterproofing before investing in new flooring.

Need help finding a professional flooring installer for your basement project? New Brunswick Flooring can match you with local professionals for free.

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Q7

How do I prevent hardwood floor gaps during NB's dry winter heating season?

The single most effective way to prevent hardwood floor gaps during New Brunswick's dry winter is to run a whole-home humidifier and maintain indoor relative humidity between 35-45% RH throughout the heating season. Gaps form because forced-air heating drops indoor humidity to 20-30% RH — far below the 35-55% range that hardwood needs to remain dimensionally stable — and the wood shrinks as it loses moisture to the dry air.

This is not a defect in your flooring or a sign of poor installation. It is a natural response of wood to NB's extreme seasonal humidity swing. From October through April, your furnace runs constantly, and every cubic metre of cold outside air that enters your home (through drafts, ventilation, or opening doors) carries very little moisture. Your heating system warms that air without adding humidity, and the relative humidity plummets. The wood in your floor releases moisture to match, shrinking across its width and opening visible gaps between planks.

A whole-home bypass or steam humidifier connected to your furnace ductwork is the most reliable solution. These units add moisture to the heated air as it circulates, maintaining a consistent humidity level throughout your home. A bypass humidifier runs $300-$600 installed in NB, while a steam humidifier runs $800-$1,500 installed. The investment pays for itself by protecting not just your hardwood floors but also your trim, doors, furniture, and your family's comfort.

If a whole-home humidifier is not feasible, **portable console humidifiers** placed in the rooms with hardwood flooring can help. You will need a unit rated for the square footage of the space — a single-room humidifier will not adequately serve an open-concept main floor. Place a hygrometer (digital humidity monitor, $15-$30 at any hardware store) in the room to track conditions and adjust output accordingly.

Other measures that reduce winter gapping:

Choose **engineered hardwood** over solid if you are installing new floors. Engineered hardwood's cross-layered construction constrains width movement to roughly one-third of what solid planks experience, so gaps are smaller and less noticeable. If you already have solid hardwood, the humidifier approach is your primary defence.

Select **narrower plank widths** for new installations. A 2.25-inch strip floor shows smaller individual gaps than a 5-inch wide plank because each board has less total movement. If you prefer wide planks, engineered construction becomes even more important.

Ensure your home is reasonably **air-sealed**. NB's older housing stock — especially pre-1980 homes in Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton — often has significant air leakage that makes maintaining indoor humidity nearly impossible. Weather-stripping, caulking, and addressing major drafts helps your humidifier work effectively rather than fighting a losing battle.

Expect some movement regardless. Even with humidity control, NB's heating season is long and the outdoor air is extremely dry. Minor seasonal gaps (the thickness of a business card or less) that close again in spring are normal and not cause for concern. Gaps wider than 2-3mm that persist year-round, or gaps accompanied by cupping or squeaking, may indicate an installation issue or a subfloor moisture problem worth investigating with a professional.

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Q8

What is the best width for hardwood floor planks in a New Brunswick home?

For most New Brunswick homes, a 4-5 inch plank width in engineered hardwood hits the ideal balance between modern aesthetics and dimensional stability in our Maritime climate. Wider planks look stunning, but every additional inch of width increases how much each board expands and contracts with NB's seasonal humidity swings — so your choice of width should be informed by both style preference and practical climate considerations.

Hardwood plank widths generally fall into three categories. **Strip flooring** (2.25-3.25 inches) is the traditional width seen in older NB homes. It has a classic, formal look, and its narrow profile means each board moves very little — making it the most forgiving option for NB's humidity cycles. **Standard planks** (4-5 inches) are the current mainstream choice, offering a clean, contemporary look that suits both heritage homes and new construction. **Wide planks** (6-8+ inches) create a dramatic, modern feel with fewer seam lines, but they demand the most from your home's humidity control.

The NB climate factor is critical here. Our province experiences a 30-50% relative humidity swing between winter drying and summer Maritime humidity. Wider boards amplify this movement — a 7-inch solid oak plank can gap by 2-3mm in winter and expand enough to cup in summer if indoor humidity is not controlled. This is why plank width

and product type must be considered together.

If you want planks **5 inches or wider**, choose **engineered hardwood**. The cross-layered construction reduces width movement by roughly two-thirds compared to solid wood of the same width. A 5-inch engineered white oak plank will gap perhaps 0.5mm in a dry NB winter versus 1.5-2mm for a solid plank of the same width. This is the reason engineered wide-plank flooring has become so popular across the province — it gives NB homeowners the wide-plank look without the climate-driven headaches.

If you prefer **solid hardwood**, stick to **3.25-4 inch widths** in NB. This is the range where solid wood's natural movement stays manageable with reasonable humidity control (a whole-home humidifier in winter, dehumidifier or AC in summer). Solid planks wider than 4 inches in NB require very disciplined humidity management to prevent visible seasonal gapping.

Room size also matters. Wider planks look best in larger, open rooms — a spacious open-concept main floor in a newer Moncton or Fredericton home is the perfect canvas for 6-7 inch engineered planks. In smaller rooms, hallways, and older NB homes with more divided floor plans, 3.25-4 inch planks look more proportional and create fewer awkward cuts at walls and doorways.

Pricing differences by width are modest. In the NB market, moving from a 3.25-inch to a 5-inch engineered oak typically adds $1-$2 per square foot to materials. Going above 6 inches can add another $1-$3/sq ft as wider planks require select-grade lumber with fewer defects. Installation costs remain similar regardless of width.

For the best results in NB conditions, pair your chosen width with proper acclimation (5-10 days minimum), professional installation with correct expansion gaps (8-12mm at all walls), and a commitment to maintaining 35-55% indoor humidity year-round.

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Q9

Should hardwood floors be nail-down or floating in a Maritime climate home?

Both nail-down and floating installations can perform well in a Maritime climate home, but the right method depends on your subfloor type, product choice, and specific NB conditions. Nail-down is the gold standard for solid hardwood over wood subfloors, while floating is often the better approach for engineered hardwood — especially in homes where moisture management is a concern.

Nail-down installation mechanically fastens each plank to the wood subfloor using a pneumatic flooring nailer. This creates an extremely solid, rigid floor with no hollow sound underfoot and no movement between planks. For solid hardwood on a plywood or OSB subfloor above grade, nail-down is the preferred method across the industry and the one most NB installers recommend. The fasteners hold each board firmly in place, which helps manage the expansion and contraction forces that NB's 30-50% annual humidity swing creates. Nail-down requires a minimum 3/4-inch plywood or OSB subfloor — if your NB home has the older board-style subfloor common in pre-1970s construction, a 3/8-inch or 1/2-inch plywood overlay ($1.50-$3.00/sq ft) should be installed first to create a stable nailing surface.

Floating installation uses a click-lock or tongue-and-groove system where planks connect to each other but are not attached to the subfloor. The entire floor assembly sits on an underlayment and moves as a unit with humidity changes. This method works with engineered hardwood and is the only option for installation over concrete, which rules out nail-down. Floating is also the preferred method over radiant heat systems because it allows the floor to expand and contract freely without the constraint of fasteners.

For NB's Maritime climate, here is how to decide:

Choose nail-down when you are installing solid hardwood on a wood subfloor above grade, you have proper humidity control (humidifier in winter, dehumidifier or AC in summer), and you want the most solid feel underfoot. This is the traditional approach and it performs excellently in NB when humidity is maintained at 35-55% RH.

Choose floating when you are installing engineered hardwood over concrete, over radiant heat, or in a situation where moisture from below is a concern (ground-level slab, basement perimeter). Floating installations also make sense in rental properties or situations where you may want to remove the floor later. Always use an underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier when floating over concrete in NB — Maritime moisture vapour transmission through concrete is continuous.

Glue-down is the third option, most commonly used for engineered hardwood directly over concrete. A full-spread adhesive bonds the planks to the slab, creating a very solid floor with excellent sound performance. Glue-down is more labour-intensive and expensive ($1-$2/sq ft more than floating) but produces a premium result. It works well in

NB when combined with proper concrete moisture testing.

Installation labour in New Brunswick runs **$3-$6 per square foot for nail-down** and **$2-$5 per square foot for floating or glue-down**. Regardless of method, proper expansion gaps (8-12mm at all walls and fixed objects) are essential in NB — our humidity swings make undersized gaps a recipe for buckling during summer expansion.

Hardwood installation of any type is a professional job. The tools, technique, and moisture management knowledge required are beyond typical DIY scope. Get matched with a qualified flooring installer for a free estimate through New Brunswick Flooring.

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Q10

How does NB's humidity affect hardwood floors and what humidity level should I maintain?

New Brunswick's Maritime humidity is the single most important factor affecting hardwood floor performance in the province, and you should maintain indoor relative humidity between 35-55% RH year-round to keep your floors stable and beautiful. NB's seasonal humidity swings are among the most extreme in Canada, and understanding how they affect your hardwood is essential to protecting your investment.

Wood is hygroscopic — it constantly absorbs and releases moisture to reach equilibrium with its environment. When indoor humidity drops, the wood releases moisture and shrinks across its width. When humidity rises, the wood absorbs moisture and expands. In a province like Ontario or Alberta, seasonal humidity changes are moderate and gradual. In New Brunswick, they are dramatic and unavoidable without active management.

Winter drying (October-April) is the most damaging season for NB hardwood floors. Forced-air heating systems heat cold, dry outside air without adding moisture, dropping indoor humidity to 20-30% RH in many homes. At these levels, hardwood planks lose moisture rapidly and shrink, creating visible gaps between boards. In northern NB communities like Bathurst, Edmundston, and Campbellton, the longer heating season means this drying period is even more prolonged and severe. Gaps ranging from hairline to 2-3mm are common in NB homes without humidity control, and the wider your planks, the larger the gaps.

Summer expansion (June-September) brings the opposite problem. Maritime humidity regularly pushes outdoor levels above 80%, and without air conditioning or dehumidification, indoor levels can climb above 65%. At these levels, hardwood absorbs moisture and expands, potentially causing **cupping** (plank edges rising higher than the centre) or **crowning** (centre rising higher than edges, often a sign of over-correction after cupping). Coastal communities like Saint John, Shediac, and the Bay of Fundy and Gulf shore towns experience the most persistent summer humidity.

The annual swing in a typical NB home without climate control can be 30-50% RH — from a winter low of 20% to a summer high of 70%. This is a punishing cycle for any wood product and is the primary reason engineered hardwood outperforms solid hardwood in the province.

Maintaining the Right Humidity

In winter, run a whole-home humidifier connected to your furnace to maintain 35-45% RH. A bypass humidifier costs $300-$600 installed in NB; a steam humidifier runs $800-$1,500. If a whole-home unit is not feasible, portable console humidifiers in rooms with hardwood can help — but you need a unit rated for the room size and a hygrometer to monitor levels.

In summer, run air conditioning or a dehumidifier to keep indoor humidity below 55% RH. A quality dehumidifier rated for your space runs $250-$500 and pays for itself by protecting your floors, preventing mould growth, and improving comfort.

Monitor with a hygrometer — a digital humidity monitor placed in the main living area costs $15-$30 and gives you real-time feedback. Check it weekly and adjust your humidifier or dehumidifier settings seasonally. Many NB homeowners set a winter target of 38-42% RH and a summer target of 45-50% RH.

If you are choosing new hardwood for an NB home and are unsure about your ability to maintain consistent humidity, engineered hardwood is the safer investment. Its cross-layered construction reduces movement by roughly two-thirds compared to solid hardwood, giving you a significant buffer against NB's humidity extremes.

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Q11

Can engineered hardwood be installed over radiant floor heating in NB?

Yes, engineered hardwood is an excellent choice for installation over radiant floor heating in New Brunswick, and it is the only hardwood type recommended for this application. Engineered hardwood's cross-layered construction gives it the dimensional stability needed to handle the temperature fluctuations that radiant heat produces, while solid hardwood's single-piece construction makes it too reactive to the heat cycling and is not recommended by most manufacturers or installers.

Radiant floor heating works by warming the floor surface to 26-29 degrees Celsius, which then radiates heat upward into the room. This is an excellent heating method for NB's long winters — it is energy-efficient, eliminates cold floors, and pairs beautifully with hardwood. However, the heat source directly beneath the flooring creates

specific demands that your product and installation method must accommodate.

Choosing the right engineered hardwood for radiant heat starts with the manufacturer's specifications. Not every engineered hardwood product is approved for radiant heat — check the manufacturer's warranty and installation guide before purchasing. Products with a **plywood core** generally perform better over radiant heat than those with an HDF (high-density fibreboard) core, because plywood transfers heat more effectively and is more dimensionally stable under sustained warmth. Choose planks no wider than 5 inches to minimize expansion and contraction, and select species with moderate density — **white oak, red oak, and hickory** all perform well, while exotic species like Brazilian cherry can be more reactive to temperature changes.

Installation method matters significantly. For radiant heat applications in NB, **floating installation** is generally the preferred method because it allows the floor to expand and contract freely without being mechanically locked to the heated subfloor. Use a quality underlayment specifically rated for radiant heat — standard foam underlayment can insulate the floor from the heat source, reducing system efficiency. Thin, dense underlayments designed for radiant applications (often cork or specialized rubber) transfer heat effectively while providing the cushion and vapour barrier that NB's moisture conditions require. **Glue-down installation** is also excellent over radiant heat and provides better heat transfer than floating, but it costs $1-$2/sq ft more in labour.

Temperature management is critical during and after installation. The radiant system should be running at normal operating temperature for at least 2 weeks before installation begins, and the engineered hardwood should acclimate in the heated space for 5-7 days. After installation, increase the floor temperature gradually — no more than 2-3 degrees per day — until you reach your normal operating temperature. The floor surface temperature should never exceed 27-29 degrees Celsius (80-85 degrees Fahrenheit), as sustained higher temperatures can damage the adhesive between the wood layers and void your warranty.

NB-specific considerations: Our Maritime humidity still applies even with radiant heat. The radiant system will help control winter humidity by keeping surfaces warm (reducing condensation risk), but you still need humidity monitoring and management. Radiant heat can actually over-dry the air near the floor surface in winter, so a whole-home humidifier remains important for maintaining the 35-55% RH range that hardwood needs.

Expect to pay **$6-$14 per square foot fully installed** for engineered hardwood over radiant heat in NB, with the higher end reflecting premium products rated for radiant applications and professional installation. This is a project that requires an experienced installer — the combination of radiant heat management, moisture control, and proper expansion planning is beyond typical DIY scope. Find contractors through the New Brunswick Construction Network at newbrunswickconstructionnetwork.com.

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Q12

What is the difference between prefinished and site-finished hardwood for NB installations?

Prefinished hardwood arrives with its stain and protective coats already applied at the factory, while site-finished hardwood is installed raw and then sanded, stained, and sealed in your home. Both produce beautiful floors, but they differ significantly in cost, timeline, durability, and how well they handle New Brunswick's Maritime humidity swings.

Prefinished hardwood is the more popular choice in NB today, and for good reason. The factory finish is cured under UV light or aluminum oxide coatings that are harder and more scratch-resistant than any polyurethane you can apply on-site. Installation is faster — once the planks are nailed down, the floor is ready to walk on immediately with no sanding dust, no fume-filled drying days, and no waiting 3-5 days for coats to cure. Materials run $5-$9/sq ft with installation adding $3-$6/sq ft, putting a typical 1,000 sq ft main floor at $8,000-$15,000 fully installed. The downside is the micro-bevelled edges between planks. These V-grooves are milled into each board to hide minor height differences, but they collect dirt and create visible seam lines that some homeowners dislike.

Site-finished hardwood gives you a seamless, glass-smooth surface with no bevels between planks — the sanding and finishing process levels everything into one continuous plane. You also get unlimited colour control, choosing any stain shade and sheen level to match your vision exactly. However, site finishing adds $2-$4/sq ft to the project for sanding, staining, and 3-4 coats of polyurethane, plus 5-7 extra days of project time while coats dry. Your home will be uninhabitable during sanding (fine dust gets everywhere despite containment) and finishing (oil-based polyurethane fumes require ventilation and vacating the space for 24-48 hours per coat).

In New Brunswick's climate, there is an important moisture consideration. Site-finished floors get their protective seal applied after the wood has acclimated to your home's conditions, which means the finish seals the wood at its local equilibrium moisture content. This can be an advantage — but only if you time the installation correctly. **Finishing hardwood during NB's winter heating season (October-April) when indoor humidity drops to 20-30% means the wood is at its driest and most contracted state.** When summer Maritime humidity arrives and the wood expands, the finish flexes with it. Conversely, finishing during NB's humid summer means the wood is expanded, and winter contraction may open micro-cracks in the finish along board edges.

Prefinished boards, because they are sealed on all six sides at the factory, have slightly better moisture resistance overall — the factory seal on the bottom and edges slows moisture absorption from the subfloor, which matters in NB homes where subfloor moisture can fluctuate seasonally.

For most New Brunswick homeowners, prefinished hardwood is the practical choice — faster installation, harder finish, less disruption, and good moisture performance. Choose site-finished if you want a perfectly seamless look, a custom stain colour, or you are refinishing an existing floor where matching new boards to old requires on-site colour matching. Either way, acclimate the wood for 5-10 days in the room where it will be installed, and maintain indoor humidity at 35-55% year-round with a humidifier in winter and dehumidifier or AC in summer.

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Q13

How thick should engineered hardwood be for a New Brunswick home?

For most New Brunswick homes, choose engineered hardwood with a total thickness of at least 1/2 inch (12mm) and a wear layer of 3mm or thicker. This combination provides the structural stability needed for NB's significant humidity swings while giving you enough real wood on top to sand and refinish at least once during the floor's life.

Engineered hardwood comes in total thicknesses ranging from about 3/8 inch (9mm) up to 3/4 inch (19mm). The total thickness affects how the floor feels underfoot, how well it bridges minor subfloor imperfections, and how it transitions to adjacent rooms. But the number that matters most for long-term value is the **wear layer** — the top layer of real hardwood that you walk on, stain, and refinish. A 1mm wear layer cannot be sanded at all. A 2mm layer allows one very light screening. A 3-4mm layer allows one full sand-and-refinish cycle. A 6mm layer — found on premium products — allows two or even three refinishes over the floor's lifetime, approaching the longevity of solid hardwood.

In New Brunswick specifically, the wear layer thickness also affects how the floor handles seasonal moisture movement. **NB homes experience 30-50% relative humidity swings between winter's forced-air drying and summer's Maritime dampness.** Even though engineered hardwood's cross-ply construction resists expansion and contraction far better than solid hardwood, the wear layer still moves slightly with humidity changes. A thicker wear layer on a thinner core can telegraph more surface movement, while a well-balanced construction — say 4mm of hardwood on 8-10mm of high-quality plywood core — distributes stress evenly and stays dimensionally stable through NB's seasonal cycles.

For specific applications in NB homes:

- **Above-grade living areas (main floor, upper floors):** 1/2 inch to 5/8 inch total, 3-4mm wear layer. This is the sweet spot for value, performance, and refinishability. Materials run $5-$9/sq ft in New Brunswick, with installation adding $2-$5/sq ft.
- **Basement installations:** At least 1/2 inch total with an SPC or plywood core rated for below-grade use. Basements in NB deal with continuous moisture vapour from concrete slabs, especially during spring snowmelt (April-June). Always install over a vapour barrier and test the slab for moisture before proceeding.
- **Over radiant heat:** Choose engineered hardwood rated for radiant heat applications, typically 1/2 inch to 9/16 inch total. Thicker products insulate against heat transfer and reduce system efficiency. Check the manufacturer's maximum surface temperature rating.
- **Floating installations:** Thicker boards (5/8 inch or more) feel more solid underfoot when floated over underlayment. Thinner boards (3/8 inch) on a floating system can feel hollow or flexible, especially in high-traffic

areas.

Avoid bargain-bin engineered hardwood with total thickness under 3/8 inch or wear layers under 2mm. These products cannot be refinished, feel flimsy underfoot, and their thin construction telegraphs every subfloor imperfection — a real problem in NB's older housing stock where subfloors are rarely perfectly flat. Investing in a quality 1/2 inch product with a 3-4mm wear layer costs a bit more upfront but delivers decades of performance in New Brunswick's demanding Maritime climate.

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Q14

Is white oak better than red oak for flooring in New Brunswick homes?

White oak is the better all-around choice for New Brunswick homes, primarily because of its superior moisture resistance — a critical advantage in NB's Maritime climate. That said, red oak remains a perfectly good floor and has been the traditional hardwood species in NB homes for generations. The right choice depends on your style preferences, budget, and where in the home the floor will be installed.

The key difference between the two species is their cellular structure. **White oak has closed, or tylosed, pores** — the cell walls are sealed off, making the wood naturally resistant to moisture penetration. This is why white oak is used for whisky barrels and boat building. **Red oak has open pores** that absorb and release moisture more readily. In New Brunswick, where indoor humidity can swing from 20-25% in winter to 60-65% in summer, red oak's open grain means it absorbs and releases moisture faster, making it slightly more prone to seasonal gapping and cupping than white oak under the same conditions.

In terms of hardness, white oak rates 1,360 on the Janka scale versus red oak's 1,290 — a modest 5% advantage that is not noticeable in daily use. Both species handle residential foot traffic well and last 50-100 years with proper care and periodic refinishing.

Appearance is where personal preference comes in. Red oak has a pronounced, warm grain pattern with pinkish-red undertones that many NB homeowners love in traditional and country-style homes. White oak has a subtler, more linear grain with golden-tan tones that works beautifully with modern, farmhouse, and contemporary interiors. White oak also takes grey, natural, and white-washed stains far better than red oak — if you want that trendy weathered or Scandinavian look, white oak is the only realistic option. Red oak's pink undertones bleed through light stains in ways that most homeowners find unappealing.

On pricing in the NB market, red oak is typically $0.50-$1.50/sq ft less expensive than white oak for comparable grades. Solid red oak runs about $5-$7/sq ft for materials, while white oak runs $6-$8/sq ft. For a 1,000 sq ft main floor, that is a $500-$1,500 difference in materials — meaningful but not dramatic. Both species cost the same to install, at $3-$6/sq ft for nail-down installation.

For NB-specific recommendations: If you are installing on the main or upper floors of a well-maintained home with good humidity control (humidifier in winter, AC or dehumidifier in summer), either species will perform well. If your home lacks consistent humidity control, or if you are in a coastal community like Saint John, Shediac, or Bathurst where ambient humidity runs higher, white oak's closed-grain moisture resistance gives it a real-world advantage over red oak. For any room near a bathroom, kitchen, or entryway where occasional water exposure is likely, white oak is the safer pick.

White oak is also the stronger choice for NB's resale market right now. Current design trends favour white oak's cleaner look, and it appeals to a broader range of buyers. Red oak can look dated in some homes, though a quality red oak floor that is well-maintained never goes out of style entirely. Whichever species you choose, acclimate the wood in your home for 5-10 days before installation, and commit to maintaining indoor humidity between 35-55% year-round.

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Q15

Can I install hardwood over an existing tile floor in my NB home?

Yes, you can install hardwood over existing tile in most cases, but only if the tile floor is in solid condition, level, and firmly bonded — and engineered hardwood in a floating installation is strongly recommended over solid hardwood for this application in New Brunswick. Installing over tile avoids the messy, expensive, and potentially hazardous process of tile removal, but there are several conditions that must be met for a successful result.

The tile surface must be **completely flat and firmly adhered**. Walk the entire floor and check for any tiles that are loose, cracked, hollow-sounding when tapped, or raised at the edges. Loose or hollow tiles mean the bond between tile and substrate has failed, and installing hardwood over an unstable base leads to movement, squeaking, and eventual damage to the new floor. If more than a few tiles are loose, removing the tile entirely or applying a levelling layer of plywood is a better approach. For minor height differences between tiles and grout lines, a quality underlayment or self-levelling compound ($2-$4/sq ft) smooths things out.

Floating engineered hardwood is the ideal method for going over tile in NB. The floating floor sits on an underlayment pad over the tile without being fastened to it, allowing the engineered planks to expand and contract independently as New Brunswick's humidity shifts seasonally. Use a foam underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier ($0.50-$1.00/sq ft) between the tile and the floating floor. This barrier is important even over tile because NB's Maritime moisture can migrate through concrete substrates and grout, especially on ground-level or basement floors.

Solid hardwood is not recommended over tile. Nail-down installation cannot penetrate tile and the concrete substrate beneath it without specialized anchoring, and glue-down installation over glazed tile requires extensive surface preparation (grinding the tile glaze) to achieve adequate adhesion. Even then, the rigid connection between solid hardwood and tile creates stress points when the wood moves seasonally — and in NB, it will move.

The biggest concern with installing over tile in NB homes is floor height. Tile is typically 3/8 to 1/2 inch thick, and adding engineered hardwood plus underlayment adds another 3/8 to 5/8 inch. That means your new floor could be 3/4 to over 1 inch higher than it was originally. This creates issues at **doorways** (most interior doors will need to be trimmed), **transitions to adjacent rooms** (you will need ramp-style transition strips), **appliance clearances** (check that your dishwasher and refrigerator still fit under countertops), and **stairways** (the first step height changes, which can be a code and safety issue).

For NB homes specifically, check whether the tile you are covering is in a kitchen or bathroom where moisture exposure is regular. If so, ensure the tile's waterproofing layer beneath it is intact, as you are now relying on it to protect both the tile substrate and the new hardwood above. If the tile was installed over a concrete slab at or below grade, **moisture testing is essential** — NB's high water table and spring snowmelt push moisture through concrete regardless of the tile layer above.

This project is manageable for experienced DIYers if you choose a click-lock floating engineered hardwood, but hire a professional if the tile floor has significant height variations, you are covering a large open-concept area (500+ sq ft), or the installation involves complex transitions to multiple adjacent rooms. Professional installation over tile runs $6-$14/sq ft fully installed in New Brunswick.

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Q16

What is the best hardwood floor colour for selling a home in the NB real estate market?

Light to medium natural tones — particularly natural white oak, light honey oak, and warm greige stains — are the safest choices for resale value in New Brunswick's real estate market right now. These colours photograph well in online listings, appeal to the widest range of buyers, and make NB homes feel brighter during the province's long, grey winters.

The NB housing market favours **neutral, timeless floors** over bold or trendy choices. Very dark espresso stains and very light whitewashed or grey-washed floors are both popular on social media, but they polarize buyers. Dark floors show every speck of dust, pet hair, and scratch — a drawback that NB buyers with active families and pets notice quickly during showings. Extremely light or grey floors can feel cold and clinical, which works against the warm, welcoming feel that most NB buyers want. **The sweet spot is a natural to medium-tone floor** that lets buyers envision their own furniture and decor without the floor dominating the room.

Specifically, the colours and species that perform best for NB resale are:

Natural white oak with a clear matte or satin finish is the current gold standard. White oak's subtle grain and warm golden-tan tone are universally appealing, photograph beautifully, and work with every design style from farmhouse to modern. The matte or satin sheen hides minor scratches better than high-gloss and aligns with current buyer preferences across all NB markets — Fredericton, Saint John, and Moncton alike.

Light honey or natural red oak remains a solid resale choice, especially in traditional NB homes where red oak has been the standard species for decades. A warm honey stain on red oak suits the character of many NB homes built from the 1960s through 1990s. Avoid orange-toned finishes — they look dated. A modern honey stain with golden-amber tones reads as warm and classic.

Medium walnut or provincial stain on oak strikes a balance between warmth and contrast. This is a versatile middle ground that appeals to buyers who find natural oak too light and espresso too dark.

From a practical standpoint, **prefinished engineered hardwood in your chosen colour** is the most cost-effective way to upgrade floors for resale in NB. Materials run $5-$9/sq ft with installation at $2-$5/sq ft, putting a typical 800-1,000 sq ft main floor at $6,000-$14,000 — an investment that NB real estate agents consistently say returns 70-100% at sale. If your existing hardwood is in good shape, **refinishing and restaining** at $3-$6/sq ft is an even better value, transforming dated orange or dark floors into a modern neutral tone for $2,400-$6,000 on a 800 sq ft floor.

One NB-specific tip: homes in the province's smaller communities and rural areas tend toward traditional tastes, where warm honey and natural oak tones sell best. In Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John, where younger buyers and urban styles are more common, lighter natural white oak and greige tones have broader appeal. Know your market, but when in doubt, a natural matte white oak floor is the single safest choice for resale value anywhere in New Brunswick.

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Q17

How many times can hardwood floors be refinished in a New Brunswick home?

A standard 3/4-inch solid hardwood floor can typically be refinished 6-8 times over its lifetime, while engineered hardwood ranges from zero to three refinishes depending on the wear layer thickness. Each refinish removes approximately 1/32 to 1/16 inch (0.8-1.5mm) of wood from the surface, so the number of possible refinishes depends entirely on how much wood sits above the tongue-and-groove joint.

For **solid hardwood at the standard 3/4-inch (19mm) thickness**, the wear surface above the tongue is approximately 5-6mm. A professional drum sanding removes about 1mm per refinish, meaning you can realistically sand and refinish 5-6 times with a drum sander. If your refinisher uses a lighter screening or orbital sanding approach — which removes less wood — you might get 7-8 cycles. At one refinish every 7-12 years (a reasonable interval for NB homes with typical residential traffic), that gives solid hardwood a functional lifespan of 50-100 years. Many NB homes built in the 1940s-1960s still have their original hardwood floors with room for several more refinishes.

For **engineered hardwood**, the answer depends on the wear layer:

- **1-2mm wear layer:** Cannot be meaningfully sanded. A very light buff-and-recoat (screening) is possible once, but any drum sanding will cut through to the plywood core. This is common on budget-priced engineered products.
- **3-4mm wear layer:** Allows one full sand-and-refinish cycle. This is the most common thickness in mid-range engineered hardwood sold in NB, with materials running $5-$8/sq ft.
- **5-6mm wear layer:** Allows two to three refinishes, approaching solid hardwood's longevity. Premium products at $7-$10/sq ft offer this thickness.

  New Brunswick's Maritime climate affects how frequently you will need to refinish. The province's 30-50% seasonal humidity swing between winter drying and summer dampness causes hardwood to expand and contract more aggressively than in drier inland provinces. This repetitive movement stresses the finish along board edges, eventually causing micro-cracking and wear lines at the joints. NB homes without consistent humidity control (humidifier in winter, dehumidifier or AC in summer) may need refinishing every 7-8 years, while homes that maintain 35-55% relative humidity year-round can stretch intervals to 10-15 years.

  Salt, sand, and grit tracked indoors during NB's long winters (November through April) are another factor. These abrasive particles scratch and dull the finish faster than in provinces with shorter winters. Using quality entry mats and regular dry-mopping during winter months significantly extends the time between refinishes.

  Refinishing costs in New Brunswick run $3-$6/sq ft, depending on the scope. A simple screen-and-recoat (lightly abrading the existing finish and applying a fresh coat of polyurethane) runs $1.50-$3/sq ft and does not count as a full refinish — it refreshes the surface without removing wood. A full sand-to-bare-wood refinish with stain change runs $4-$6/sq ft. For a 1,000 sq ft main floor, budget $3,000-$6,000 for a full professional refinish.

  Hardwood refinishing is firmly in the "hire a professional" category. Drum sanders are powerful and unforgiving — a moment's hesitation leaves visible gouges that require re-sanding to correct. Professional refinishers also know how to manage NB's humidity conditions during the curing process, timing the work for stable weather and controlling indoor moisture to ensure the finish cures properly.

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Q18

What causes hardwood floors to cup in New Brunswick homes during summer?

Hardwood floors cup in New Brunswick homes during summer because Maritime humidity causes the underside of each board to absorb more moisture than the top surface, making the edges swell higher than the centre. This is the single most common hardwood complaint in NB, and it is almost always caused by the dramatic seasonal humidity swing that defines the province's climate.

Cupping happens when there is a **moisture imbalance between the top and bottom of the board**. During NB's summer months (June through September), outdoor humidity regularly climbs above 70%, and without air conditioning or dehumidification, indoor humidity can exceed 60-65%. The underside of hardwood planks — which faces the subfloor and is less protected by finish — absorbs this ambient moisture first. The bottom of the board expands while the top, sealed by polyurethane or factory finish, resists moisture uptake. This differential expansion pushes the board edges upward, creating the characteristic cupped or concave profile across each plank.

In New Brunswick specifically, several factors make cupping more common and more severe than in drier provinces:

The Maritime humidity swing is the primary culprit. NB homes commonly experience indoor relative humidity dropping to 20-30% during winter heating season, then climbing to 55-65% or higher in summer — a 30-50% annual swing. This is more extreme than inland cities like Calgary or Winnipeg. Hardwood installed during the dry winter months is at its narrowest and driest state. When summer humidity arrives, the wood absorbs moisture rapidly and expands, and cupping is how that expansion manifests if the moisture enters unevenly.

Crawl spaces and ground-level floors in NB homes are especially vulnerable. Maritime moisture from NB's high water table migrates upward through soil and concrete, keeping the underside of the subfloor assembly damp. Inadequate crawl space ventilation or missing vapour barriers compound the problem, pushing moisture into the hardwood from below while the top surface remains dry.

Concrete subfloors on main levels and in older NB homes release moisture vapour continuously, especially during spring snowmelt (April-June) when the water table peaks. Hardwood installed over concrete without proper moisture mitigation cups predictably every spring and summer.

Coastal NB communities — Saint John, Shediac, Bathurst, and Bay of Fundy towns — experience persistently higher ambient humidity and fog cycles that keep conditions damp for extended periods. Homes in these areas are more prone to summer cupping than inland locations.

The good news is that **mild cupping is often reversible**. If the moisture imbalance is corrected — by running a dehumidifier or air conditioning to bring indoor humidity down to 40-50% — many cupped floors will flatten out as the wood releases excess moisture and reaches equilibrium. This can take weeks to months. Do not sand a cupped floor flat until you have identified and corrected the moisture source and given the floor a full seasonal cycle to stabilize. Sanding a cupped floor while it is still wet locks in the problem — when the wood eventually dries and contracts, the boards will crown (centres higher than edges), creating a worse problem than the original cupping.

Prevention is straightforward but requires commitment: maintain indoor humidity between 35-55% year-round using a whole-home humidifier in winter and a dehumidifier or central air conditioning in summer. Ensure crawl spaces have vapour barriers and adequate ventilation. Test subfloor moisture before installation. Choose engineered hardwood over solid hardwood if your NB home lacks consistent climate control — engineered construction's cross-ply layers resist cupping far more effectively than solid planks.

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Q19

Can I install hardwood flooring myself in my NB home or should I hire a professional?

Hardwood flooring installation is one of the projects where hiring a professional delivers meaningfully better results than DIY for most homeowners, especially in New Brunswick where moisture management is critical to long-term performance. That said, if you choose a floating-installation engineered hardwood with a click-lock system, a competent DIYer can achieve good results in straightforward rooms.

The distinction matters: **nail-down solid hardwood installation is firmly in the professional category.** It requires a pneumatic flooring nailer (rental cost $50-$80/day), precise blind-nailing technique at the correct angle and spacing, careful moisture acclimation (5-10 days minimum in NB), proper expansion gap planning, and experience managing the layout pattern to avoid short boards, misaligned joints, and waste. Mistakes with nail-down hardwood are expensive and visible — split tongues, squeaky boards, uneven spacing, and poor racking patterns are difficult to fix after the fact. Professional installation for solid hardwood runs $3-$6/sq ft in New Brunswick, and for a 500-1,000 sq ft area, that $1,500-$6,000 in labour buys you a floor that lies flat, stays quiet, and looks polished for decades.

Floating engineered hardwood with click-lock joints is the one hardwood option that works reasonably well as a DIY project. The planks snap together without nails or glue, float over an underlayment pad, and do not require specialized tools beyond a tape measure, utility knife, pull bar, tapping block, and a mitre saw for end cuts. If your room is rectangular with minimal obstacles (no complex angles, few doorways, no stairs), and you are patient enough to follow acclimation protocols and expansion gap requirements, you can do this yourself.

However, even with floating engineered hardwood, NB's climate adds complications that DIYers must take seriously:

Acclimation is non-negotiable. Stack the unopened boxes in the room where they will be installed for 5-10 days before starting. In NB, wood delivered from an unheated warehouse or cold delivery truck in winter is far colder and drier than your home's conditions. Installing without acclimation leads to excessive expansion once the wood reaches equilibrium, causing buckling and lifted edges — especially during the summer humidity spike.

Expansion gaps must be 10-12mm around all walls, pipes, cabinets, and fixed objects. NB's 30-50% seasonal humidity swing means floating floors move more here than in drier provinces. Undersized gaps — the most common DIY mistake — cause the floor to buckle during summer expansion. Never pin the floor with heavy furniture placed directly against walls.

Underlayment selection matters. Over concrete subfloors (common in NB bungalows and split-levels), you must use an underlayment with an integrated vapour barrier. Over wood subfloors, choose an underlayment appropriate for your subfloor condition and never double up underlayments if your engineered planks already have a pre-attached pad.

Subfloor preparation is where many DIY projects go wrong. NB's older housing stock — particularly homes built before 1970 — often has board subfloors rather than plywood, with uneven surfaces that telegraph through thin flooring. A professional knows when to add a plywood overlay ($1.50-$3.00/sq ft) versus when the existing subfloor is adequate.

For a typical NB home, **budget $6-$14/sq ft fully installed for professional engineered hardwood**, or $4-$9/sq ft in materials if you do it yourself. The labour savings are real, but weigh them against the risk of moisture-related failures in NB's demanding climate. If this is your first hardwood project, consider hiring a professional for the main living area and tackling a bedroom or den yourself as a learning experience.

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Q20

What is the best Canadian-made hardwood flooring brand available in New Brunswick?

Several excellent Canadian-made hardwood flooring brands are available in New Brunswick, with Lauzon, Mercier, Preverco, and Mirage consistently ranking among the top choices for quality, durability, and suitability for Maritime climate conditions. All four are manufactured in Quebec and Ontario, giving NB homeowners access to premium hardwood produced with North American species specifically engineered for Canadian humidity ranges.

Lauzon (based in Papineauville, Quebec) is one of Canada's largest hardwood manufacturers, producing both solid and engineered hardwood from sustainably harvested Canadian timber. Their Pure Genius line features a titanium dioxide finish that actively purifies indoor air — a genuinely innovative technology, not just marketing. Lauzon's engineered products use a multi-ply Baltic birch core that handles NB's seasonal humidity swings well. Their products are widely available through NB flooring retailers, with materials running $6-$10/sq ft depending on species and collection.

Mercier (Saint-Georges, Quebec) has been manufacturing hardwood flooring since 1980 and is known for exceptionally tight quality control and rich stain colours. Their Atmosphere collection offers contemporary colours that appeal to modern NB homebuyers, while their Design+ line allows custom stain options. Mercier's engineered hardwood uses a high-density HDF core on some lines and plywood core on others — for NB installations, choose the plywood-core products for better moisture performance. Materials range from $6-$11/sq ft.

Preverco (Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures, Quebec) manufactures high-end solid and engineered hardwood with some of the best factory finishes in the industry. Their Engiwood engineered line uses a 3.5mm wear layer on a 9-ply cross-laminated core — excellent dimensional stability for NB's 30-50% humidity swings. Preverco's colour palette leans toward the natural and contemporary tones that perform well in NB's current real estate market. Pricing runs $7-$12/sq ft for materials, placing them in the premium category.

Mirage (Saint-Georges, Quebec) consistently wins industry awards and offers one of the most durable factory finishes available — their DuraMatt and NanoLinx finishes are specifically designed to resist scratching and wear. For NB homes with pets, children, and heavy winter boot traffic, Mirage's finish durability is a real advantage. Their engineered products use a 3.2mm wear layer (one full refinish possible) on a multi-ply core. Materials run $7-$12/sq ft.

All four brands manufacture using **Canadian hardwood species** — red oak, white oak, hard maple, yellow birch, and walnut — sourced from Quebec and Ontario forests. These domestic species are naturally suited to Canadian temperature and humidity ranges, unlike imported tropical species that behave unpredictably in NB's climate extremes.

For NB-specific advice, choose engineered hardwood from any of these manufacturers over solid for ground-level and below-grade installations. Their engineered products are built to handle the humidity swings that cause problems in Maritime homes. For above-grade installations in homes with good humidity control, solid hardwood from these Canadian manufacturers will perform beautifully for generations.

Availability varies by NB retailer. Visit flooring showrooms in Moncton, Fredericton, or Saint John to see and compare these brands in person — colour and texture are personal choices that are difficult to judge from online images alone. Expect fully installed costs of $8-$17/sq ft depending on the brand, species, and whether you choose

solid or engineered.

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How do I choose between 3/4 inch and 1/2 inch hardwood for my NB renovation?

Choose 3/4-inch solid hardwood for new construction or full-floor renovations where floor height is not a constraint, and 1/2-inch engineered hardwood for renovations over existing subfloors, areas with floor height limitations, or installations where New Brunswick's moisture challenges make engineered construction the smarter choice. The decision comes down to your subfloor type, installation method, floor height budget, and long-term refinishing goals.

3/4-inch hardwood is the traditional standard and is almost always **solid hardwood** (one piece of wood all the way through). It installs via nail-down over a plywood or board subfloor and cannot be installed over concrete. The 3/4-inch thickness provides a thick wear surface above the tongue-and-groove joint (approximately 5-6mm), allowing 5-8 refinishes over a 50-100 year lifespan. It feels substantial and solid underfoot, and the mass of the thicker plank contributes to better sound dampening. In New Brunswick, materials run $5-$8/sq ft for domestic species (red oak, white oak, maple, birch) with nail-down installation adding $3-$6/sq ft.

The downside of 3/4-inch solid hardwood in NB is its vulnerability to the province's humidity swings. Solid wood expands and contracts more than engineered alternatives, and NB's 30-50% annual humidity range pushes solid hardwood harder than almost any other province. Without consistent humidity control (humidifier in winter, dehumidifier or AC in summer), 3/4-inch solid hardwood in NB will develop visible seasonal gaps in winter and may

cup during humid summers. It is also the heaviest option, which matters in older NB homes where floor joists may already be carrying significant load.

1/2-inch hardwood is almost always **engineered hardwood** — a real hardwood wear layer bonded to a plywood or HDF core. Its thinner profile makes it the go-to for renovation scenarios where floor height is constrained. When you are installing over an existing subfloor, adding 1/2 inch of engineered hardwood plus underlayment raises the floor less than 3/4-inch solid, reducing conflicts with door clearances, appliance heights, and transitions to adjacent rooms. This height advantage is especially valuable in NB split-level homes and bungalows where floor transitions between living areas, kitchens, and hallways are tight.

Engineered 1/2-inch hardwood also offers **installation flexibility** that 3/4-inch solid cannot match. It can be floated over underlayment, glued down, or stapled — making it compatible with concrete subfloors, radiant heat systems, and below-grade basements where solid hardwood cannot go. For NB basements and slab-on-grade construction, 1/2-inch engineered is effectively your only hardwood option.

The trade-off is refinishability. A 1/2-inch engineered plank with a 3-4mm wear layer (the most common in the $5-$9/sq ft range) allows one full sand-and-refinish. Premium products with 5-6mm wear layers allow two to three refinishes but cost $7-$10/sq ft.

For your NB renovation, consider these specific scenarios:

- **Matching existing 3/4-inch hardwood in adjacent rooms:** Use 3/4-inch solid in the same species and stain to achieve a flush transition.
- **Renovating over plywood subfloor with normal ceiling height:** Either works. Choose 3/4-inch solid for maximum longevity if humidity control is reliable, or 1/2-inch engineered for better dimensional stability with less maintenance.
- **Installing over concrete slab or in a basement:** 1/2-inch engineered is the only appropriate choice. Always test the concrete for moisture first — NB's Maritime water table pushes vapour through concrete continuously.
- **Over radiant heat:** 1/2-inch engineered rated for radiant systems. The thinner profile transfers heat more efficiently.
- **Older NB home with uneven subfloor:** 3/4-inch solid bridges minor imperfections better, but the subfloor should still be levelled. 1/2-inch engineered over a proper underlayment also works if the subfloor is prepped.

  Both options require proper acclimation (5-10 days in the installation room) and expansion gaps (10-12mm around all fixed objects). Whichever thickness you choose, invest in quality materials from reputable Canadian manufacturers — the NB climate is too demanding for bargain-grade hardwood.

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