

American Hardwood Floors Living the American Dream

Five minutes with Garry Craig of American Hardwood Floors is all you need before his enthusiasm and knowledge of the hardwood flooring industry becomes apparent. There must be some truth to the saying, “Do what you love for a living and you will be successful.” Garry’s enthusiasm for the industry is contagious.

Now the sole owner, Garry started working for American Hardwood Floors in high school, proving himself a worthy craftsman. He blends “old school” professionalism with a willingness to learn. In the Seattle area his excellent reputation has won him recognition by homeowners and peers alike. He relies almost solely on referrals for his business and his stellar reputation as a craftsman has kept him in business for over 24 years.

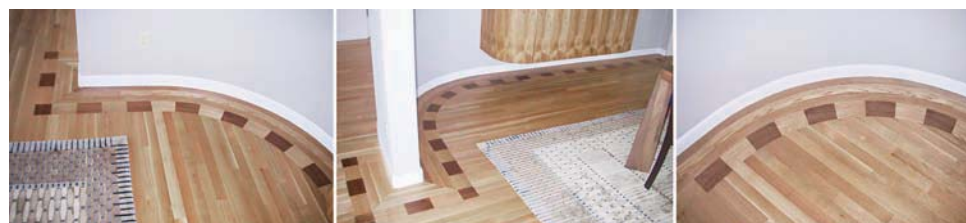
Garry feels that today’s contractors are really a carpenter and a finisher. He takes pride in both the installation and the finishing of a floor, realizing that good installation is the base for the whole project. He takes just as much care in the finishing of a floor. “Don’t miss the details!” is American Hardwood Floors philosophy.

Meticulous work and craftsmanship may define the job, but “a professional makes it look easy,” states Garry. Whenever they run across new problems or issues, they feel that “part of being a professional is learning how to deal with it. Don’t be in a rush. Look at it from different angles to figure it out,” Garry advises. He tells of one job when they were perplexed by why after one week the finish wasn’t hardening. The Northwest has moisture problems, but he had never had a problem with Glitsa finishes. After questioning the homeowners, a leaking furnace was deemed to be the culprit. The furnace was repaired and the floor was resanded and refinished.

At American Hardwood Floors they know that craftsmanship and quality products make the job. Garry prefers Glitsa because of its consistency and proven track record, noting that Glitsa backs up their product with excellent customer service. Garry’s customers (97% residential) want Glitsa finishes too. “It’s a product that refers itself,” adds Garry. They use Glitsa 90% of the time, only making exceptions when the homeowner insists on another product.

Their preferred system is Glitsa Sealer + Lite Scent. Garry uses 2 coats (1 sealcoat + 1 topcoat) or 3 coats (2 sealcoats + 1 topcoat), depending on the job. He recommends a 2-coat system for harder woods like Brazilian Cherry and Maple, but prefers a 3-coat system for softer woods and over stains. He also recommends a 3-coat system for kitchens and households with pets.

American Hardwood Floors specializes in quality remodel jobs. Garry states, “remodels are a good start for people new to the trade – a good learning experience.” Whether it is a high-profile job or low-end job, a small project or a large one, Garry says, “Each job is the same to me. We treat every floor like it is our own house.” ♦



The length of the Walnut was adjusted slightly throughout to fit the layout of the room.

AWARDS:

Aside from several high-profile homes, American Hardwood Floors has had two Seattle Street of Dreams Homes.

TIPS OF THE TRADE FROM GARRY CRAIG:

- Choose your crew carefully. “You need a worker that cares about what they are doing. If they don’t care, you can’t teach them. **I trust my own workers.**”
- **“NEVER thin the finish.** Trying to save 10 cents can cost you hundreds of dollars.”
- **Shut off the breaker to the refrigerator** before starting a job. He notes, “You just need a couple of hours and then you can turn it back on. That way food doesn’t go bad, but the fan doesn’t kick on when you are coating next to the refrigerator.”
- An often-overlooked problem: **don’t forget to empty the bottom pan of the refrigerator.**
- **“Cross ventilation is VERY important!”** How Garry obtains this depends on the house. Old houses tend to be draftier and have some natural cross-ventilation whereas newer houses tend to be sealed up tighter.