

WOOD STOCK

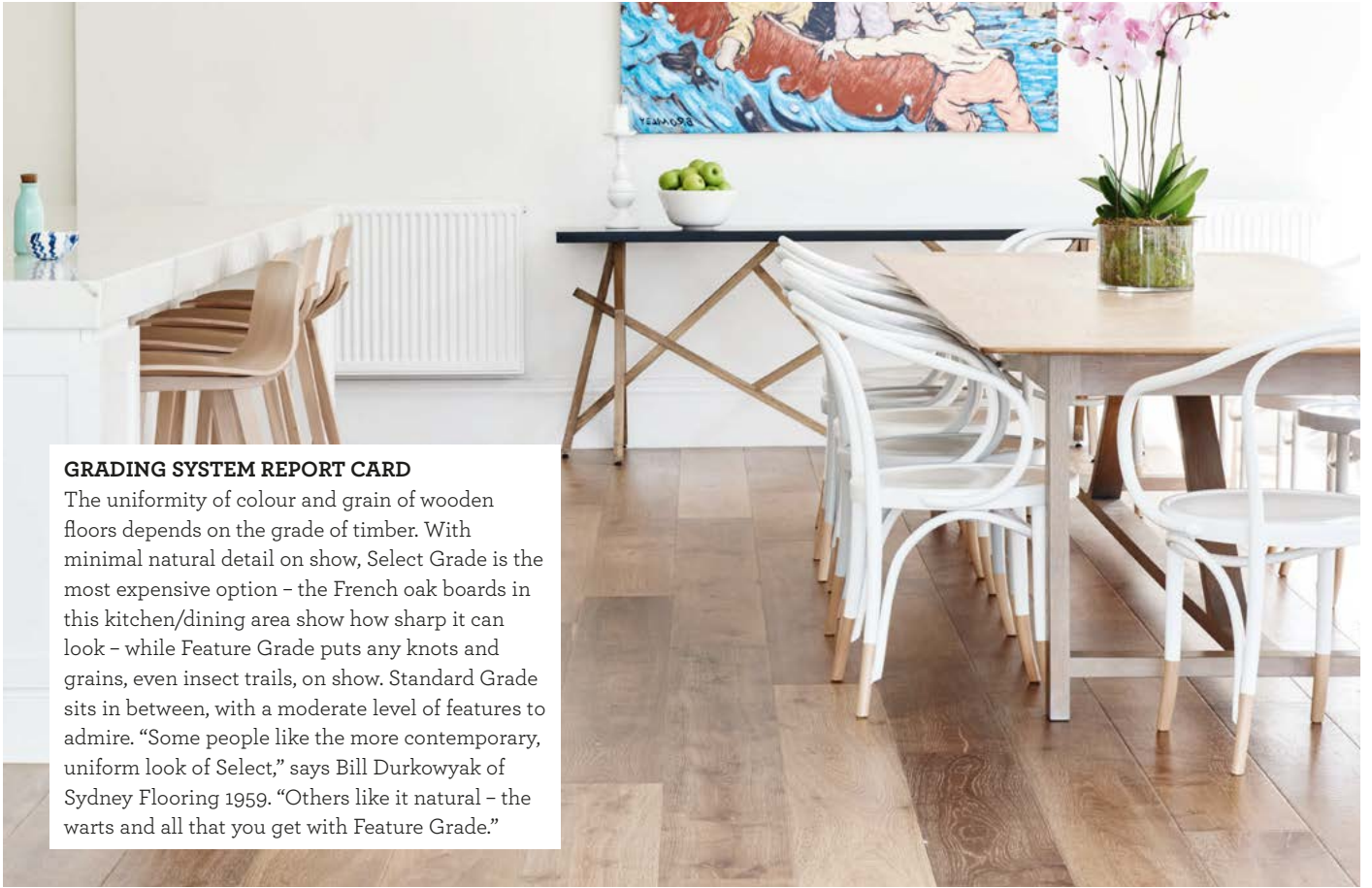
WITH ENDLESS TIMBER FLOORING OPTIONS AVAILABLE, WHERE DO YOU START? OUR BUYERS' GUIDE LAYS DOWN THE FACTS

WORDS SALLY PATERSON

EASY TO CLEAN, hygienic and adaptable to just about any interiors scheme, wooden floors have been our go-to material underfoot for generations. "Timber floors are versatile and offer natural warmth and beauty, making them a great choice for almost every room," says Carpet Court ambassador and interior designer, Darren Palmer. With a limitless array of colours, grains and finishes to choose from, this hardworking surface makes a style statement all on its own.

KNOW YOUR FLOORS

Not all timber flooring is created equal. Solid planks are just that and come in raw, unfinished condition. Installation means possible acclimatising, fixing to a subfloor or joists, sanding and finishing. They are unbeatable for longevity. "Plenty of solid timber floors more than 100 years old still serve the purpose they were put down for," says managing director Bill Durkoyak of Sydney Flooring 1959. On the other hand, engineered floorboards have a timber face on a multi-plywood base and come pre-finished, such as the engineered oak featured in this kitchen by Blakes London. They are quick to install, with no sanding, staining or sealing required. Some products are compatible with underfloor heating and the stability of the base also allows for wider board widths. >



GRADING SYSTEM REPORT CARD

The uniformity of colour and grain of wooden floors depends on the grade of timber. With minimal natural detail on show, Select Grade is the most expensive option - the French oak boards in this kitchen/dining area show how sharp it can look - while Feature Grade puts any knots and grains, even insect trails, on show. Standard Grade sits in between, with a moderate level of features to admire. "Some people like the more contemporary, uniform look of Select," says Bill Durkowyak of Sydney Flooring 1959. "Others like it natural - the warts and all that you get with Feature Grade."



MAKING A COMEBACK
 Recycled timber boards are having a resurgence in popularity, while parquet flooring in a herringbone pattern (such as this stained engineered oak, left) can adapt to all schemes. "Dark timber floors can look fantastic - if you have white cabinetry and walls, the contrast is a feature in itself," says interior architect Sally Rhys-Jones - brushbox hardwood (below right) is a case in point. "The Scandinavian trend is still coming through," says Anne Plumb of Royal Oak Floors. "Greys, ash tones and whites are very popular." Oregon pine (below left) is a perfect timber for this trend.



"Some of the colours and finishes available with engineered boards would be hard to achieve with a solid timber floor" ~ Anne Plumb, Royal Oak Floors

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timber types

BLACKBUTT: This hardy timber has a straight-running grain with pale colouring, making it ideal to stain.

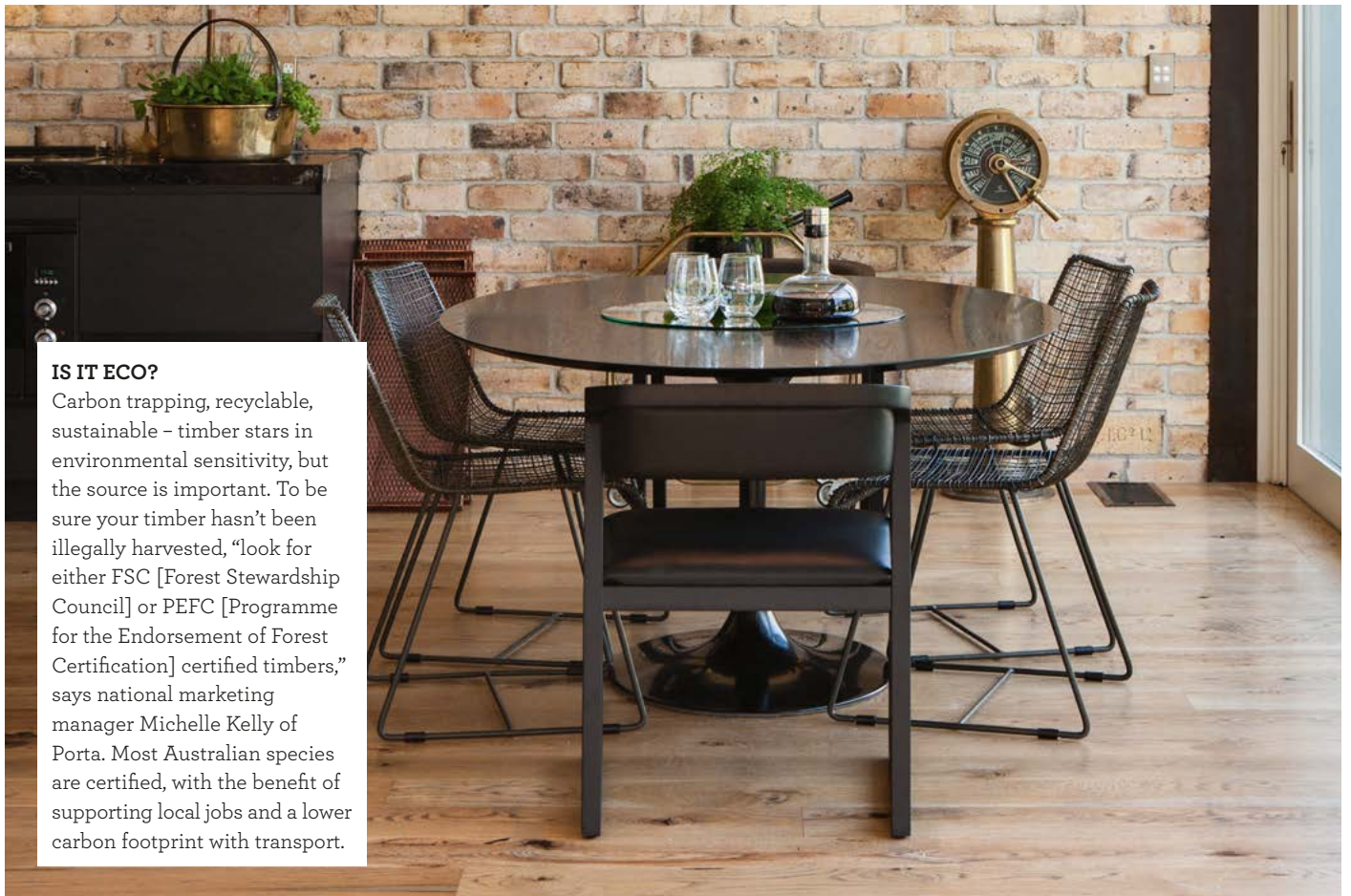
IRONBARK: A coarse texture and rich colours ranging from grey to red lend a refined, classical air.

JARRAH: A slow-growing hardwood, it's known for its rich red hues and distinct grain features – just right for heritage or Federation styles.

OAK: From our own Tasmanian variety to American and French options, oak has creamy light-brown notes, growth rings and a delicate grain. It's superb in a Scandinavian scheme, especially smoked limed oak (pictured).

SPOTTED GUM: Visual variety is the key here, with colours ranging from sandy to chocolate brown, with pink and olive undertones to boot. >





IS IT ECO?

Carbon trapping, recyclable, sustainable – timber stars in environmental sensitivity, but the source is important. To be sure your timber hasn't been illegally harvested, “look for either FSC [Forest Stewardship Council] or PEFC [Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification] certified timbers,” says national marketing manager Michelle Kelly of Porta. Most Australian species are certified, with the benefit of supporting local jobs and a lower carbon footprint with transport.



TIMBER TRUTHS

What makes a timber a ‘hardwood’? Not its ‘hardness’ but its biological make-up. Most hardwoods are denser and stronger than softwoods, but not always. If in doubt, look for the Janka rating, an impact test carried out on wood species to largely determine whether it is suitable for flooring. “The higher the number, the greater the hardness,” says Michelle. Species such as ironbark (14.0) and spotted gum (11.0) score highly – at the other end of the scale, (below, from left) cypress pine, American oak and European oak score 6.1, 6.0 and 6.0 respectively. **hb**



“Have the installer pre-stain some timber samples and see how each appears in different light all around the house”

~ Sally Rhys-Jones, interior architect