

National Hardwood Lumber Association Introduces First-Ever National Grading Standard for Hawaiian Koa Wood

Setting a National Standard for a Heritage Hardwood

MEMPHIS, TN, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [National Hardwood Lumber Association](#) (NHLA) proudly introduces a groundbreaking national grading standard for

Hawaiian Acacia koa—a milestone in recognizing the commercial resurgence of one of the most cherished hardwood species in the world.

“

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Spessert

“This standard shifts koa trading from subjective and fragmented to transparent and globally credible,” said Dana Spessert, Chief Inspector at NHLA. “Buyers and sellers can now transact with confidence using a unified

grading protocol.”

Established in 1898, NHLA has long served as the leading authority on hardwood lumber grading. The koa standard continues this legacy—introducing clear, measurable criteria based on clarity, figure, character, and structural integrity, ensuring consistency and fairness across the industry.

The koa grading standard was developed in close collaboration with the [Hawaiian Legacy Reforestation Initiative](#) (HLRI), a nonprofit dedicated to restoring Hawaii’s native forests, and Hawaiian Legacy Hardwoods (HLH, LLC), a commercial producer of sustainably grown, carbon-neutral koa. Together, they have planted more than 700,000 native trees across nearly 1,200 acres on Hawaii Island, helping re-establish robust endemic Hawaiian forest ecosystems with koa as the backbone.

“Koa has long been celebrated for its exceptional beauty, rich history, and tonal qualities. With the introduction of NHLA’s koa grading standard, the species enters the commercial market no longer as just a rare luxury, but as a renewable, high-value hardwood backed by clear grading rules and sustainable forestry practices,” said Jeffrey Dunster, CEO of HLH. “With reforestation efforts maturing and global demand rising, this new NHLA grading methodology ensures koa’s beauty and utility can be responsibly shared with the world—at scale and with integrity.”

- For Buyers: A reliable, standardized grading system makes sourcing and evaluating koa easier, reducing procurement risks and increasing confidence.

- For Sellers: Recognized NHLA grading gives koa producers access to new markets, both nationally and internationally.
- For the Industry: The rule establishes a foundation for transparent pricing, fair valuation, and sustainable harvesting practices in Hawaii's growing forestry economy.

The standard will be included in NHLA's next Rules change process and is now available for immediate use by inspectors, producers, and manufacturers handling koa lumber.

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