

Warping Concern

Because humidity in Japan is higher than in Canada, exterior wooden doors are reported to warp within a matter of months. Even domestic manufacturers have had this problem with domestic wood. Some have developed special coatings and provide re-coating service every five years.

The water content in wooden doors imported from North America is reported to be 9 per cent whereas that of Japanese domestic wooden material is 15 per cent. Thus, Canadian doors are considered to be "too dry."

Although small, there are some Japanese manufacturers of wooden doors who are successful because their doors are made in the Philippines using ebony, rosewood, Chinese quince, and teak. Observers comment that because these are hardwoods and resistant to humidity, warping is not usually a problem.

In contrast to entrance doors, there are better market opportunities for interior doors because weathering is not an issue. What is essential is that they have good design, finishing and a reasonable price.

Style and Design Preferences

Canadian trees have a slower growth rate and therefore a denser grain than those grown in U.S. The denser grained wood is preferred by the Japanese. Thus in terms of wooden materials, Canada has the superior opportunity. This is particularly true in the high end of the market, which is the main area to exploit.

Many respondents have indicated that a positive feature of imported windows is they do not require further modification or refinishing. This is not the case for doors.

However, there is a distinct design preference among Japanese for the thin grid found in the Andersen products.

Aluminum windows and metal entrance doors still dominate the Japanese market in spite of the change in consumer preferences towards wooden doors and windows.

Think Long Term and do Homework

Finally, it is essential in Japan for the seller to think of the long term, and take care to establish the "right" partnership. The important point is that products must be exposed in the market for a long period of time, and sellers must be patient. In practical terms, this also means that care must be taken in selecting an agent, as it is undesirable to switch after a few years.