

# **The Good Wood Guide: A Residents Guide to Purchasing Environmentally Friendly Timber**

**(Produced by the Waverley Council, NSW)**

## **Introduction**

This Guide is designed to provide information about the various timbers available and enable readers to choose environmentally friendly materials suitable for their needs. The purpose of the Guide is to discourage the use of rainforest and native forest timbers (such as old growth), as timber sourced from these areas contributes to the destruction of valuable forests and habitats. Because of this Waverley Council recommends the use of plantation grown or recycled timbers.

By taking the time to read this Guide and by talking to your timber supplier about your building needs and concern as to the origin of the timber, you can make a difference to the environment.

"Think Globally, Act Locally"

## **Timber and Good Wood**

Timber can be an environmentally friendly building material that is both renewable and reusable. Unlike other building materials such as concrete and steel, timber only requires only land, water, nutrients and sunlight to grow.

The development of an ecologically sustainable timber industry is necessary to ensure timber resources are available for future needs. This is why you need to purchase good wood.

Good Wood is:

- NOT derived from rainforests or native growth forests (old growth)
- grown in plantations as a renewable resource
- recycled timber
- laminates (plywoods) and other composite woods from plantations
- timber that has not led to habitat destruction.

## **Australia's Timber Market**

The Australian saw milling industry supplies about 70% of our domestic demand for timber, mostly from the plantation sector. The rest is primarily made up by softwoods from North America and New Zealand, and rainforest hardwoods from South East Asia.

Unfortunately, a lot of domestic and imported timbers are sourced from forests that are not managed in an ecologically sustainable way. This is why you should ask where your timber was grown and to insist on timbers that are good woods.

## **Imported Rainforest Timbers**

About 13% of Australia's sawn timber is sourced from tropical forests. We also import tropical rainforest timber items such as veneers, plywoods and picture mouldings. The majority of these timber products are sourced from unsustainably logged forests and could be replaced by sustainable locally grown alternatives.

Logging tropical rainforests causes the extinction of hundreds of plant and animal species each year in addition to loss of the home of many indigenous tribal peoples. In South East Asian rainforests the rate of clearing is five million hectares per year. Once an intact rainforest has been destroyed, it cannot be replaced for thousands of years.

### Commonly Imported South East Asian Rainforest Timbers to Avoid

Name	Use
Meranti	All mouldings, dowels, architraves
Merbau	Skirting, joinery
Ramin	Mostly picture frames, fine joinery
Pacific Maple	All mouldings, dowels, architraves
Philippine Mahogany, Calantas	Pretend red cedar, fireplaces, stairs, furniture
Keruing, Naytoh, Narra, Kapur	Joinery
Teak	Outdoor furniture, carved beams, cabinet work
Jelutong	Joinery, carved work, toys
Motoa, Merawan, Batu	House posts

### Old-Growth Forests

Old-growth forests are native forests which have had no recent disturbance by humans and regenerate naturally over hundreds of years. Like rainforest, old growth forests provide vital habitats for many species of flora and fauna. These forests are becoming increasingly rare both overseas and in Australia. Consequently we recommend that you avoid timbers sourced from old growth forests.

### Timber from Australia's Forests

The issue of which Australian timber species to recommend raises a number of questions that are hotly debated. On the one hand, industry generally believes that there is no problem with logging native forests, while environmental groups advocate the boycott of timbers that are not grown in plantations or recycled. Generally, we recommend that you use plantation and recycled timbers. However, we acknowledge that it is important to recognise and support timber from other sources such as hardwood forests, farm forests, urban forests and properly managed native restoration forests, as these sources of timber will play an increasing role in the future for the supply of our domestic timber needs.

### Plantation timbers

Plantation softwood such as radiata pine and the tropical native hoop pine cover about one million hectares in Australia and produce almost half of all the sawlogs. Plantation pine is suitable for most housing needs. Treated pine is superior in quality and less expensive than many of the native hardwoods, and is available in commercial quantities.

Plantation hardwoods comprise much less crop area than softwoods. Timber from native forests supply the majority of the domestic hardwood market although most is used for woodchips. Governments and private landholders are increasing their quantities of plantation hardwoods for timber, although it will be a number of years until there is a commercial quantity available for sawlog use.

If you think you need hardwood timber ask your supplier:

1. Is plantation softwood a better option?
2. Where did the timber come from?
3. How can I minimise the amount of timber I use?

Some retailers will be unable to tell you whether a timber is sourced from native forests or a plantation. If they don't know, you may wish to consider another supplier. If you need larger beams, we recommend engineered laminated pine beams. They are usually made from plantation-grown offcuts and are stronger than most hardwoods.

### **Good Wood Suggestions for Common Building/Development Applications**

#### **Framing & General Construction**

- Plantation pine (eg. radiata, slash, hoop)
- NZ plantation
- Oregon recycled timber
- Composite products (eg. Glulam, LVL)

#### **Flooring**

- Recycled hardwoods
- Plantation pine particle board and non-forest ply
- Floor thickness plantation pine (eg. cypress and radiata)

#### **Cladding**

- Treated plantation pine, plantation Oregon weatherboards
- Treated pine plywood
- Durable recycled timber, fibrous cement cladding

#### **Concrete Formwork**

- Plantation pine and recycled timber (Note: a lot of the formply used in Australia is derived from tropical timber)

#### **In ground uses/stumps**

- Recycled Australian hardwoods
- Pressure treated radiata pine (only CAA treated pine is suitable in ground applications)

#### **Windows & Door Frames, External Mouldings**

- Treated plantation pine
- NZ plantation Oregon
- Recycled timber
- (Australian hardwoods are needed for external use eg. plantation Western Red Cedar)
- Craftwoods

Fencing, exposed decking and stairs

- Treated plantation pine
- Durable recycled timber

Indoor stairs

- Recycled timbers
- Plantation pine (not for treads)
- Glulam
- Craftwood

These applications use the greatest quantity of timber in most domestic buildings. By using GOOD WOOD for these purposes you will be minimising your impact on the environment.

### Commonly Used Australian Timbers (including rainforest and old-growth timbers)

Check their origin before purchasing

Ash, Crows L	Gum, Red River L	Pine, Cypress R
Ash, Canary L	Gum, Spotted R	Pine, Hoop R
Ash, Alpine L	Ironbark R	Pine, Huon L
Ash, Mountain R	Jarra R	Pine, King William L
Beech, Myrtle L	Karri R	Pine, Kauri L
Beech, White L	Maple (Queensland) L	Red Satinay L
Beech, Brown L	Messmate R	Rosewood L
Blackbutt R	Mahogany L	Sassafras L
Brush box R	Oak, Silky L	Silvertop/Stringybark L
Cedar (Red) L	Oak, Tasmanian L	Tallowwood R
Gum, Flooded L	Pine, Bunya L	Walnut, Queensland L
Gum, Manna L	Pine, Celery Top L	Walnut, Black L
		Walnut, Yellow L

R = regular availability L = limited availability

### Plantation Pine Treatments

There are two main types of treatment for pine:

- **CCA** (copper-chromium arsenic) is used on timber that must withstand exposure to persistent dampness. CCA treated timber does not protect against the effects of weather unless painted or coated. Oil-based CCA (also known as PROCCA or Tanalith Gold) are probably the best varieties as they absorb no water, allow minimal leaching, and have a long, useful lifetime. CCA treated timber should never be burnt and care should be taken not to inhale any sawdust or vapours when applying CCA
- **LOSP** (Light Organic Solvent Preservatives) are solutions of fungicides. They may contain insecticides and water repellents. LOSP treated timbers are used for external applications, such as fencing, decking, outdoor furniture. This treatment works best when painted. LOSP treated timbers are not suitable for in ground applications, as LOSPs will leach in to the soil.

Note: There are alternative termite treatments available for buildings such as stainless steel mesh or crushed granite.

**Disclaimer**

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information in the Guide is accurate and comprehensive, it is intended as a guide and does not preclude the rendering of architectural advice or service.

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