



Florkowskys' Wood Species

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SPECIES: Alder (Red)

DURABILITY: Very poor

SOURCE: Alder grows primarily in the Pacific Northwest states of Oregon and Washington.

DESCRIPTION: Lightweight for a hardwood, alder has a fine texture with relatively good impact resistance. Heartwood pale roseate, sapwood lighter, with fine machining, staining and finishing characteristics. Figure is similar to birch to which it is related. Poor decay resistance.



SPECIES: Ash (White)

SOURCE: Central states, Ohio and Mississippi River valleys

DURABILITY¹: Poor

DESCRIPTION: Ash is heavy, hard and strong, open grained, tough and elastic. It is very susceptible to powderpost beetle infestation. The lumber trade typically mixes and sells both white ash and green ash (*Fraxinus pennsylvanica*) as white ash, because of their similar appearance. Green ash is slightly softer.



SPECIES: Anigre

DURABILITY¹: Poor

SOURCE: West and East Africa, Tanzania

DESCRIPTION: Light tan heartwood typically has a straight grain, occasionally with a wavy appearance running through it. Lustrous. Cedar-like scent. Medium to coarse texture; but in heavier grades, it is fine textured. Due to its silica content, its blunting effect on tools can be severe. To prevent chipping out, adequate support is needed. Very good to polish. Used for furniture, cabinets, light construction, high-class joinery, and utility plywood.



SPECIES: Beech

DURABILITY: Good

SOURCE: Eastern U.S., westward to Wisconsin and Texas

DESCRIPTION: Beech is heavy, hard, strong and stiff, with good shock resistance and wear properties. Medium luster, finishes well. Heartwood light reddish brown, displaying fine medullary ray flecks. Experiences considerable movement in use due to high shrinkage.



SPECIES: Birch (Yellow)

DURABILITY: Poor

SOURCE: Northeastern and Great Lakes states, Appalachian and Adirondack regions, and Canada

DESCRIPTION: Birch is an important commercial timber. It is heavy hard, stiff and strong. Close-grained, light reddish brown heartwood; sapwood pale to nearly white. Figure and color similar to maple, but slightly coarser textured. Architect's delight due to fine finishing capabilities. Sweet birch tends to be slightly darker in color, heavier and harder than yellow birch.



SPECIES: Hickory

DURABILITY: Excellent

SOURCE: Eastern U.S.

DESCRIPTION: Color varies by species, but all species are very heavy, hard elastic and strong. Experiences high shrinkage as it seasons, susceptible to blue stain. Toughest and strongest American wood in common use. Machines, burns and steam-bends well. Heartwood light reddish-brown, sapwood white.

¹ Durability refers to a wood's resistance to rotting in wet environments.



SPECIES: African mahogany

DURABILITY: Moderate

SOURCE: Tropical West and Central Africa

DESCRIPTION: Is used where a good quality, medium weight hardwood is needed. Heartwood is shades of pinkish red, darkening to reddish brown with exposure. Sapwood is a creamy or yellowish white. Grain usually interlocked, and dark grooves appear when cut longitudinally. Texture varies. Severe buckling occurs when bent. When planing, use a cutting angle of 20 degrees. Excellent for furniture, cabinets, rotary and flat sawn veneers, staircases, doors, musical instruments, intarsia works, window frames, and the weapons industry.



SPECIES: Hard Maple

DURABILITY: Excellent

SOURCE: New England, Great Lakes states and Eastern Canada

DESCRIPTION: Heavy, hard and strong. Close-grained, polishes to high luster, wears evenly. Heartwood very pale reddish brown, sapwood virtually white. Often found with curly or birds-eye figure. Experiences high in-use movement with changes in humidity.



SPECIES: Red Oak

DURABILITY: Very good

SOURCE: Eastern United States, particularly Appalachian states, Ohio and Kentucky

DESCRIPTION: A very important wood for cabinetry and flooring, red oak is slightly coarser in texture than white oak, with smaller, dark colored rays and large, rounded open pores. A little easier to work than white oak. Uniform in color with reddish tinge.

TYPICAL FLAT-TO-RIFT-SAWN WHITE OAK



SPECIES: White Oak

DURABILITY': Very good

SOURCE: Eastern United States, Central states and Appalachians

DESCRIPTION: Outstanding resistance to wear and abrasion. More pronounced and longer rays than red oak. Occasionally available with crotches, swirls and burls. Pores are angular and very numerous, filled with glistening substance called tyloses, which makes wood suitable for water-tight containers.



SPECIES: Purpleheart

DURABILITY': Very good

SOURCE: Central and South America.

DESCRIPTION: Purpleheart is brown when freshly cut but oxidizes to a bright violet purple and eventually to a dark purplish brown. Hard, heavy and finely textured, purpleheart's grain is usually straight, often with a fine, curly figure. There is considerable variation in color, texture and density among the several species that account for commercial supplies of purpleheart. It is moderately hard to work but takes a glossy, lustrous finish.



SPECIES: Sapele

DURABILITY: Excellent

SOURCE: Africa

DESCRIPTION: Heartwood is a pinkish red color. Dark, slightly wavy lines appear when planed. Hardness does not prevent it from being workable. It is used for decorative veneers, paneling, furniture, staircases, musical instruments, and flooring, and artistic carpentry.



SPECIES: Teak

DURABILITY: Very good

SOURCE: Burma, Thailand, Indonesia, India. Plantation-grown in Latin America and Africa.

DESCRIPTION: Teak is one of the world's noblest timbers, growing to heights of 150 feet, with a straight, trunk up to 3 ft. to 5 ft. in diameter. Heartwood is dark yellow when freshly cut, darkening to a medium to dark brown upon exposure to air and light. Usually straight-grained but occasionally interlocked. Easy to work but with a severe blunting effect on edge tools; carbide tipped cutters are recommended if not essential. The wood has an oily or waxy feel and a fresh scent when worked. Its durability is legendary. It is widely used for shipbuilding, boat trim, flooring, paneling, marine plywood, outdoor architecture, tanks and vats, furniture, cabinetry and kitchen accessories.



DURABILITY': Very good

SOURCE: Eastern U.S., principally central and Appalachian states

DESCRIPTION: Moderately hard, strong, durable, excellent shock resistance. Heartwood rich, dark brown, sapwood when freshly cut nearly white. Universally esteemed for superb technical properties, including stability, and generally regarded as the most beautiful and most valuable cabinet wood in North America.



SPECIES: Wenge

DURABILITY': Very good

SOURCE: Central and Eastern Africa

DESCRIPTION: Dark brown to black with fine black veining. A heavy, coarse-textured wood with bending and shock-resistant properties similar to ash and hickory. Hard and heavy. Used for tool handles and carving. Also called Pallissandre.



SPECIES: Zebra Wood

DURABILITY: Good

SOURCE: British West Africa, Gaboon and the Cameroons

DESCRIPTION: Highly decorative, light gold color, with narrow streaks of dark brown to black, visible by quartering. Heavy and hard, it can be polished to a high luster, but it is rather coarse in texture. Zebra wood has a rather unpleasant odor when working it.



SPECIES: Cherry

DURABILITY: Good

SOURCE: North America

DESCRIPTION: Cherry heartwood varies from rich red to reddish-brown. The sapwood is white. It has a fine, straight grain with narrow brown pith flecks and small gum pockets. It has a smooth texture.