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A Beginners Guide to Woodworking

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Know Your Woods

Know your lumber

The first step for any new woodworker is to gain a solid knowledge of the different types of woods. Certain woods are best for specific uses and it can be counter productive to use an inappropriate wood for a project that requires a different type.

It's a good idea to have an overall understanding of the different classifications of woods and a discussion of different tree species and the woods they produce.

Here are some of the tree species classified into hardwoods and softwoods, together with the description of the wood they produce.

1. Hardwoods

Hardwood lumber comes from deciduous trees, which have characteristics like broad sets of leaves, capability to bear fruits or nuts, and dormancy during winter. These trees can be seen growing in regions with a temperate climate. Since not all species are strong

enough, most lumbers produced are seldom used for flooring and structural purposes.

Hardwood lumber includes:

-Walnut

Walnut refers to a small family of flowering plants that is well known for the nuts and the lumber it produces. They belong to the order Juglandaceae family of the Juglandales order.

The walnut tree produces a fine-textured and strong lumber. It is capable of resisting warping and shrinking. That is why the lumber is used for making wall paneling, cabinets, gunstocks, as well as veneered and solid furniture.

-Cherry

This tree species is closely related to fruit bearing trees like plums, peaches, apricots and almonds. They belong to the Rosaceae family.

Aside from the edible fruit that cherry trees produce, it is also known for the fine-textured, shrink and warp-resistant lumber that reddens when exposed to sunlight.

Because of the lumber's capacity to age well, it is commonly used in making cabinets, furniture handles, novelties and boat trims.

-Maple

This tree species can be commonly seen near streets and is used as an ornament because of its autumn color and leaf shape. It belongs to the family Aceraceae. The tree is native to Northern America and Europe.

It also produces quality timber which is finely textured but is hard and strong. The lumber shrinks moderately, and the fact that it is durable makes it ideal for flooring, especially in bowling alleys.

2. Softwoods

Softwood lumber, on the other hand, is produced from coniferous trees with needle-like leaves. These trees are evergreen,

and bear cones. They are used more as structures than decorations.

Some known softwood lumbers include:

- Pine

Pines are evergreen trees that have 210 species, all of which produces cones, timber and pulpwood. They belong to the Pinaceae family.

The lumber it produces doesn't shrink, warp or swell. It also has a good finishing. It can be worked on easily because of its uniform texture.

Because of those characteristics, pines are used widely in building houses, panels, boxes, molds and furniture.

- Redwood

Redwoods, also called sequoia trees, are huge evergreen trees that are known for their reddish brown trunks that can grow up to 100 ft. It has a buttressed base to support the conical tree. All of the

sequoia species belong to the Taxodiaceae family.

Redwood lumbers are known to be durable, and naturally decay-resistant.

That is why it is preferred to be used in building outdoor furniture as well as fencing and house sidings. It can also be used indoors for your indoor finishing, paneling and veneering.

- Spruce

Spruce grows in the farther north, where it converges with the Arctic forest. It belongs to the Pinaceae family, together with cedar, pine and fir. It has woody leaf bases and pendulous cones, its distinct characteristics.

The spruce lumber is resistant to decaying. It shrinks moderately too and has a nice finish. More so, it is lightweight.

That is why it is ideal in spars and masts in boats and wooden parts in aircrafts, boxes/crates, and ladders.

- Cedar

Cedar is closely related to the tree mentioned previously. However, there are unique features that draw the line between cedar and spruce.

The wood produced from this tree species is naturally sweet in odor and reddish in color. It can easily be worked on.

It is the ideal wood in chest-making, Venetian blinds, dock planks, shingles, linings in closet, and novelties.

Now that you know the trees behind the woods you use, not only did you gain knowledge about them, you also know their basics uses so you can make decisions for your projects.

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