

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1941

QUESTION BOX

Pay more for seasoned than green wood?
What woods give off most heat?
Test for seasoned wood?
When and how to cut wood
Outlook for cordwood market?

ANSWERS From

wood experts of the Forest
Service of the U. S. Depart-
ment of Agriculture

--ooOoo--

Letters in the mailbag this week are good evidence that December has arrived. Several letters this week ask about firewood. And a few even inquire about Christmas trees.

The answers to these questions come from wood experts of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service.

Let's start with the letters about firewood. Here are a couple from people who are buying firewood. A housewife says that seasoned firewood costs more to buy than green firewood. She wants to know whether the seasoned wood is worth the higher price.

Wood experts say seasoned wood burns more efficiently--that is, gives off more heat than green wood. Burning green wood is likely to fill the chimney with creosote. And burning green wood for cooking is likely to spoil the meal and the cook's disposition in the bargain. Seasoned wood is the only wood for cooking use. You can't get the dependable hot fire for cooking if you burn green wood, although for a slow fire, some folks like to mix a little green wood with dry wood. But, all in all, the wood experts say there's good reason why seasoned wood brings a higher price than green wood. However, you can take advantage of the lower price of green wood by planning ahead and buying it now for use a year from now.

Still another housewife wants to know what kind of wood is best to buy. She asks: "What kind of wood gives off the most heat?"

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

1947

Wood experts list eleven varieties of wood that give off the most heat in burning. These woods are: hickory, oak, beech, birch, hard maple, ash, elm, locust, longleaf pine, and cherry. A cord of any of these woods gives off the same amount of heat as a ton of coal, provided, of course, that the wood is thoroughly seasoned. Next best for heat value are: shortleaf pine, western hemlock, red gum, Douglas fir, sycamore, and soft maple. A cord and a half of these woods gives off as much heat as a ton of coal.

Still another letter here says: "Several years I've been fooled into thinking I was buying seasoned wood for the fireplace only to find myself with a cellar full of green wood. Please tell me how a city woman with no experience with wood can tell whether wood is green or seasoned before she buys."

Here are some guides to buying seasoned wood. Seasoned wood looks dry and has a greyish weathered color instead of the bright white or yellowish color of green wood. The cut ends of the seasoned wood show small cracks or checks. And the bark on seasoned wood is loose and breaks off easily. The bark is tight on green wood.

People sometimes confuse wet wood with green wood. Wood delivered after standing out in the rain may look wet and burn slowly. But in a dry basement or woodshed, it should dry out shortly and burn well.

Now from these questions from people who are buying wood, let's turn to some letters from farm people who are cutting and selling it.

The first letter says: "How long does wood take to season properly for burning?"

Foresters answer: From 9 months to a year. Farmers in northern States get most of their cutting finished by the middle of December for use the following year. They try to cut before the heavy snow makes the job difficult.

By the way, the foresters remind you that during the last World War the demand for firewood was so great, and the price so high, that many farm wood lots were cut hastily and carelessly--and permanently ruined as a result. The foresters hope farmers won't repeat that mistake if wood is again in demand at good prices, as seems likely.

Foresters say you can have a steady income over the years if you cut your woodlot wisely. They suggest that you think of your woodlot as a savings bank--and use the interest rather than the principal. One way to help make your woodlot more valuable is to thin out the "weed" trees for firewood. Cut first the dead and damaged trees, and the poorer species. The less valuable varieties include: gray birch, aspen, blackjack oak, sourwood, blue beech, and ironwood. Also cut any stunted trees in crowded groups. The more valuable trees left standing will have a better chance to grow after the poorer trees are cut out and sold for firewood. The trees taken out leave space to give the good trees more light, moisture and plant food from the soil.

Here's another letter from a farm woman with cordwood to sell. She asks: "What's the outlook for the cordwood market?"

Wood marketing men reply: Very good. If transportation shortages cause shortages of coal and oil, fuelwood is likely to be used more widely and bring higher prices during the next few years.

Last question: "Where can I get information on buying a good Christmas tree?"

If you buy your tree early, be sure to buy a fresh tree rather than one cut early and allowed to dry out badly before it sells. And listen next week for special tips on buying Christmas trees. That's all the questions and answers for today.

###

