

Forestry Notes



Firewood Seasoning and Storage

Seasoning firewood

No matter by what name—curing, seasoning, or air-drying, the process is simply a means of removing water from wood until it is “dry.” The higher your firewood’s moisture content, the less efficiently it burns.

Basically, if it is dry, firewood burns more efficiently, no matter what the species. In this case, **“dry” wood means that only about 20 % of its weight is water.** The percentage of moisture in “green” wood varies from a high of 95% down to about 40%.

Fresh cut “green” wood may weigh two or three tons per cord. (A cord is a stack of wood 4 feet high by 4 feet wide by 8 feet long).

How to dry or season firewood

Firewood needs time to dry. Firewood should be cut, split, and stacked for drying 6 to 9 months before burning. Late winter, early spring and early summer are ideal times for cutting firewood for the next heating season.

Cutting a tree in the summer and not cutting the tops and branches on the tree for a week or so until the leaves wilt, helps remove a significant amount of moisture. This works in the summer when the leaves will draw moisture from the wood and dry it more quickly than if you limb the tree immediately.

Seasoning firewood depends on the weather, the species of wood you have, and how you prepare and store it. Hardwoods such as oak take longer to dry than softwoods like pine.

Splitting the wood and cutting it to the lengths that fit your fireplace or furnace is essential for speeding the drying process. The greater the surface exposed to the air, the faster the drying.



Firewood will dry faster by stacking the wood off the ground, in an open area, and covering the top of the pile to keep the rain off. This uses the sun rather than your fire to drive off the moisture.

Storage

Dry firewood can be stored in the same pile for storage as it was stacked when green for drying. Whether it is delivered to you green or dry, and un-stacked, it is best to stack it so there is good air circulation.

Cover just the top of the pile to keep rain from soaking through the pile. Covering the whole stack with a plastic tarp or other protection will trap condensation and promote decay.

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