6-1-1965

Home Grown Timber for Farm Construction

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HOME GROWN TIMBER FOR FARM CONSTRUCTION

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Look to your own woods first for timber for your building needs. In fact, the chief aim of good woods management is to produce enough lumber for farm buildings and repairs. Although working or nailing the hardwoods is not as easy as with softwoods, the availability of hardwoods, their durability and lower cost will often compensate for the extra effort required to put them to use. Factors such as durability, strength, resistance to bending, and nail holding ability, make some species more suitable for certain uses than others. White oak, for example, is a strong durable wood that serves well as sills of buildings, skids under movable hog houses, corn cribs or poultry houses. Hickory has the desired strength for this use but its lack of durability gives it a low rating for such purposes.

Native timber has several other advantages over timber shipped in from distant areas:

1. It is usually cheaper because the long shipping cost is eliminated.
2. As a group, the hardwoods are much more durable and will produce structures that last longer than those built of softwoods.
3. It is more easily obtained locally in most instances.
4. A great variety of species provides wood to fit most any use.

Steps to Consider in Using Timber from Your Farm Woods

1. Determine your building needs and what is available in your woods. If you have more trees that should be removed than your present building plans call for, the surplus lumber will keep if properly piled. If trees are thrifty and in good condition, cut only what you need. Table 1 shows how many trees of different sizes are needed for 1000 board feet of lumber.

Table 1. Number of trees to cut for 1000 board feet of lumber

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diameter</th>
<th>Short trees</th>
<th>Average trees</th>
<th>Tall trees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>2 1/2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 1/2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* At 4 1/2 feet above ground.

Example: If you are planning a poultry house needing 2,500 board feet of lumber and your trees are of average height, you will need to cut about ten 20-inch trees (2.5 thousand x 4).

2. The best time to cut timber is during fall and winter months. Logs and lumber are less likely to check and are not subject to insect injury or rot.
3. Select the right kind of timber for right use. See diagram on the back page for recommendations. If your woods will not supply the right species or will not give you all the material that you need, investigate the possibility of obtaining native lumber from local sources.

4. Arrange for custom sawing and do as much of your own logging and hauling as possible to save on cost. Present rates for custom sawing run from about $15 to $25 per thousand board feet.

5. It is better to use seasoned lumber. See discussion below.

6. Cut only mature, over-mature trees or those that are defective or over topped by better trees.

Seasoned or Green Lumber

Seasoned lumber is better for farm buildings because it is stronger, holds nails better, provides tighter joints, will take and hold paint better and will absorb preservatives better. Seasoned hardwood lumber is a little more difficult to nail and will warp and twist unless it has been properly piled for seasoning. (See Mimeo F-37 in reference list).

If tight buildings are desired or if they are to be painted, seasoned lumber should be used, and the disadvantages can be minimized by these procedures:

1. Drill holes for nails, screws, or bolts.
2. Blunt nails slightly and dip in beeswax soap or oil before driving.
3. Use a heavy hammer for driving nails.
4. Use a wedge or shim under warped or twisted boards to take the "spring" out of the board until a nail is through it.

Preservative Treatment
For Timber, Posts and Poles

If it is necessary to use non durable lumber for sills, skids or floors, longer service can be obtained by a preservative treatment. Full pressure treatment will provide the maximum in service life. In many localities this is available on a custom basis. Treatments (brush or spray) with Penta (penta-chlorophenol) or creosote give some protection on seasoned lumber, but a cold soaking treatment is recommended. All framing, notching or other cutting should be done before the preservative is applied.

For information on treating see the Purdue Extension Publication "Preserve Your Posts with Penta." This bulletin deals with posts, but the methods described can be used with lumber.

Posts and Poles

Post timber fall into two classes. Those that are naturally durable and those that will give long service life if treated.

Durable without Treatment:

- Osage-orange
- Black locust
- Red cedar
- White cedar
- White oak
- Catalpa
- Mulberry

Durable if Treated:

- Red oak
- Black ash
- Honey locust
- Sassafras

Pole Construction

For buildings such as machinery sheds, storage sheds, or tramping sheds next to milking parlors, poles can be used for supports for the roof and as horizontal members for the sides. Peeled poles are less likely to
decay and when dry can be painted with creosote. If poles are to be used unpeeled, cut them during the winter, keep them off the ground to dry, and spray with a mixture of 1 part coal-tar creosote and 3 parts kerosene.

As mentioned above, poles should also be treated with preservative, either a pressure treatment or a cold soaking treatment in Penta for longer service life. Poles used for corner members or other supports in buildings should be placed on stone or concrete foundation.

References

Some Important Indiana Woods, Their Properties and Uses, E. J. Lott, Purdue Mimeo F-27.


How to Pile and Season Native Lumber, E. J. Lott, Purdue Mimeo F-37.

Treated Wood Products for Farm and Home Outdoor Use, M. O. Hunt and R. H. Perkins, Purdue Mimeo F-45.

USE OF HOME-GROWN WOOD

Adaptation of Native Lumber to Farm Building Construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beech</td>
<td>Hackberry</td>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>Sycamore</td>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maple</td>
<td>Basswood</td>
<td>Beech</td>
<td>Hackberry</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Maple</td>
<td>Elm</td>
<td>Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>Elm</td>
<td>Y. Poplar</td>
<td>Cottonwood</td>
<td>Soft Maple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elm</td>
<td>Hackberry</td>
<td>Basswood</td>
<td>Aspen</td>
<td>Red Oak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interior Trim - Black walnut, yellow poplar, oak, ash, honey locust, sycamore, wild cherry. Furniture - Oak, wild cherry, sycamore, gum, walnut, ash, hard maple.

(Timber to be used for interior trim, furniture or flooring in homes must be kiln dried or air seasoned and then placed indoors until thoroughly dry before it is finally machined)

Further information, or additional copies of this mimeograph can be obtained through your County Agent or a forester, or the Department of Forestry and Conservation at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.