

## **Different types of wood**

### **Akasa**

A straight-grained grey-brown heartwood and sapwood. Its uses include interior joinery, light structural work, flooring, utility furniture, veneer for plywood and turnery. A general utility interior wood.

### **Ash**

A light wood with a distinctive lustre when polished. It has an open grain and is reasonably hard wearing. Ash can be successfully stained to almost any colour.

### **Balsa**

Although it's one of the softest and lightest weight timbers, balsa is a hardwood. It's used for heat, sound and vibration insulation and for model making.

### **Bamboo**

Bamboo has a rich golden colour that's very hard wearing. It's impervious to moisture, so is often used in conjunction with the ornamental part of a water feature or for flooring in bathrooms, conservatories and other wet areas. Chapter 44 of the Tariff covers the trunk part only and not the foliage.

### **Beech**

A hard durable wood that in its natural form comes in a variety of warm, soft honey tones. Steamed beech has been treated at high temperatures to create a unique red colouring.

### **Brazilian mahogany**

Denser than many African mahoganies. It's very durable and can be used as boat building timber and for constructional work.

### **British pine**

See **Redwood, European**.

### **Cedar**

Western red cedar is a lightweight softwood used for construction work. It's durable with a straight grain.

### **Celtis**

A straight-grained but sometimes interlocked wood. It has yellowish grey heartwood and sapwood and a fine texture with a slightly lustrous look. Its uses include interior joinery and trim, flooring, mouldings, veneer, plywood, handles and some furniture.

## **Conifer**

Coniferous - or cone-bearing - trees are known as conifers. Usually evergreen, the trees have needle-like leaves and produce softwood timber. This term generally covers and includes:

- araucaria
- cedar
- cypress
- Douglas fir
- fir
- hemlock
- juniper
- larche
- pine
- podocarpuse
- redwood
- spruce
- yew

It also includes woods such as cypress and manio, which are coniferous despite being hardwoods.

Japanese katsura **isn't** coniferous. Cedars are coniferous in the strict sense but in commercial use the name cedar has been extended to certain woods that aren't coniferous. Non-coniferous "cedars" are:

- Central American - or cigarbox - cedar
- Brazilian cedar
- Moulmein cedar
- Guiana cedar
- Paraguay - or red - cedar, except western or Pacific red cedar which **is** coniferous

## **Cherry**

A reddish-brown, straight-grained wood that may contain pith flecks and small gum pockets that create random patterning.

## **Dahoma**

This has a coarse interlocked grain, a yellowish brown streaky heartwood and a pale sapwood. It's a tough timber mostly for exterior use, such as exterior structural timbers, mining timbers, marine work, sleepers, outdoor furniture, decking and so on.

**Danta**

This has a fine grain mostly interlocked with mahogany red heartwood and a lighter sapwood. It's hard wearing and strong and used for high-quality joinery, cabinet work, bench tops, boat components, decking, and interior and exterior applications.

**Douglas fir**

This is grown in North America and the UK. It's a light reddish-brown softwood, used for construction, interior and exterior joinery and in plywood. It's very strong for its weight.

**European beech**

This is grown in Europe and is a white to pale brown hardwood, used for furniture, interior joinery and flooring. It may also be used for plywood.

**Elm**

This wood has a hardness and grain similar to or even exceeding that of oak. It's available in a variety of colours and tones from cream to dark brown and its grain is equally diverse, ranging from straight to wavy. Characteristically, the wood incorporates knots and burrs.

**Greenheart**

This is grown in Guyana and is a dense yellow or olive green to brown hardwood used for heavy construction such as bridges, marine and freshwater construction.

**Iroko**

This is grown in West Africa. It's a yellow-brown hardwood with a grain that's irregular and interlocked. It's used for interior and exterior joinery and for constructional work. A cheaper alternative to teak.

**Khaya**

Also known as West African mahogany, it's slightly lighter in weight than Brazilian mahogany but normally has a coarser texture.

**Ligneous**

Examples of ligneous materials are bagasse, bamboo, cereal straw and flax or hemp shives.

**Maple**

Maple is fairly straight grained and is characterised by irregular patterning, which can include fiddleback and bird's eye patterns. It has a light brown heart-wood and thin white sapwood that can be tinged with reddish brown. It's very strong, heavy and has a high resistance to knocks. Once stained it has a light, almost translucent appearance. Canadian maple is one of the hardest species.

## **Meranti**

This is a mixed species grouping of the *shorea* genus that's grown in South East Asia. Commercially the timbers are grouped according to their colour and density:

- Dark-red meranti - or dark-red seraya - and red lauan are medium to dark-red brown hardwoods used for interior and exterior joinery and for plywood
- yellow meranti - or yellow seraya - are yellow-brown hardwoods, used for interior joinery and plywood
- light-red meranti - or light-red seraya - and white lauan, are pale pink to mid-red hardwoods, used for interior joinery and plywood

## **Oak**

This is traditionally the finest building timber. Colours range from light to medium brown and it's mainly straight grained. Close-grained white oak has well pronounced and long rays. Red oak - so called because of its autumnal foliage - has more flecks and a defined grained finish. Both are heavy, hard-wearing and very strong.

### **Oak, European**

This is grown in Europe and is a yellowish-brown hardwood used for furniture, interior and exterior joinery, flooring, barrels and fencing.

## **Opepe**

This is grown in West Africa. It's a yellow to orange-yellow hardwood, used for heavy construction, marine and freshwater construction and for exterior joinery and flooring.

## **Okoume**

This is obtained almost exclusively from the forests of Gabon. It's a soft wood that's salmon pink in colour with a fibrous texture and an irregular grain that looks like a light mahogany. The tree produces well-formed cylindrical logs suitable for slicing and peeling and is mainly used to make veneer sheet.

## **Pine**

A cheaper and more readily available alternative to traditional hardwoods. Pine is a pale wood that can range from yellow to almost red in appearance. It's susceptible to wear and denting, especially in high traffic areas.

### **Pitch pine**

A Central American softwood pine with strength and durability compared to most pines. The commercial grade is used for constructional work.

**Poplar**

This is pale in colour, light and very soft. It's used in joinery, furniture interiors, packing cases and for making plywood. After conifers it's the principal source of cellulose for pulp paper.

**Redwood, European**

*Pinus sylvestris* is grown in Scandinavia, the Baltic states and the Russian commonwealth (the former USSR). It's also grown in the UK, where it's known as Scots pine or British pine. It's a pale yellowish-brown to red brown softwood, commonly used for construction, joinery and furniture.

**Sapele**

This is grown in South East Asia and is a medium reddish-brown hardwood with a marked stripe figure, used for interior joinery, furniture and flooring.

**Scots pine**

See **Redwood, European**.

**Sitka spruce**

This is a close and straight grained wood with a high strength-to-weight ratio.

**Southern yellow pine**

This is often used for interior and exterior construction as it's easy to work and finishes well. It has very few defects.

**Teak**

This is grown in Burma and Thailand and has been extensively planted elsewhere. A golden-brown hardwood, sometimes with dark markings that's used for furniture, interior and exterior joinery.

**Utile**

This is grown in West Africa and is a reddish-brown hardwood, used for interior and exterior joinery, furniture and cabinet work.

**Walnut**

This has occasional waves and curls and rich dark tones that are created through a combination of rich dark heartwood and creamy brown sapwood. It has a varying grain pattern.

**West African mahogany**

See Khaya.

**Western hemlock**

This is grown in North America and is a pale brown softwood, used for construction and joinery.

**Western red cedar**

This is grown in North America and is a reddish-brown softwood, used for roofing shingles, exterior cladding and greenhouses.

**Whitewood, European**

This is grown in Europe, the Baltic states and the Russian commonwealth (the former USSR). It's a commercial grouping of white to pale yellowish-brown softwoods, commonly used for construction, joinery and flooring.