



Firewood Guide

Firewood Guide Table

Generally, hardwood logs are best for open fires because they tend not to spit excessively, however there are exceptions. Conifer wood tends to spit excessively when fresh, so is best used for sealed wood burning stoves, again there are exceptions. Many conifers also cause an oily, sticky 'soot' to form inside the chimney which can increase the risk of chimney fires. Once properly seasoned conifer wood can be successfully used on the open fire without excessive spitting. Ideally, conifer wood is best mixed with hardwood.

Wood that is going to be seasoned should be cut to length (300mm or 10" to 18"), split to size and stacked. The stack should be completely covered on the top to prevent rain wetting the wood, but air must be allowed to reach the sides of the stack. Leave to season for at least 1 year (more if possible).

In simple terms, the word 'seasoned' means 'dry' and the term 'green' means 'freshly cut from living tree'. All wood will, when supported by lots of kindling and/or a good ember base, burn unseasoned. However, you may find some woods are not worth using in this state due to the length of 'hissing' time (as the water boils from within the wood) before they can burn.

The quality of the following firewood is based upon various characteristics such as its speed of burn, heat given off, tendency to spark (spit), ease of splitting, time required to season, etc.

Grade: 1 = Poor

Grade: 2 = Okay

Grade: 3 = Good

Grade: 4 = Excellent

Alder	Alnus	Low quality firewood	1
Apple	Malus	Needs to be well seasoned. Burns well with a pleasant smell and no sparking/spitting.	3
Ash	Fraxinus	One of the best types of firewood. It has a low water content and is easily split with an axe. Burns best when seasoned but can be burned green.	4
Beech	Fagus	Beech has a high water content and will therefore only burn when seasoned.	3
Birch	Betula	An excellent firewood that will burn when green. However, it burns quickly so should be mixed with a slower burning wood such as Oak.	3.5
Cedar	Caedrus	A good firewood that burns with a pleasant smell. Gives a good lasting heat and does not spit much. Small pieces may be burned green.	2.5
Cherry	Prunus	Must be well seasoned. Burns with a pleasant smell without spitting.	2.5
Elm	Ulmus	A good firewood but due to its high water content of approximately 140% (more water than wood!) it must be seasoned very well. It may need assistance from another faster burning wood such as Birch to keep it burning well. However, it gives off a good, lasting heat and burns very slowly. Larger pieces of wood will prove difficult to split.	2.5

Eucalyptus	Eucalyptus	Allow to season well since the wood is very sappy when fresh. Can be difficult to split due to stringy wood fibre. Best method is to slice into rings and allow to season during the summer, the rings will start to split themselves. Burns fast with a pleasant smell and without spitting.	2.5
Hawthorn	Crataegus	A good firewood.	3.5
Hazel	Corylus	An excellent wood when seasoned. Burns fast without spitting.	4
Holly	Ilex	A good firewood that can be burned green.	3
Hornbeam	Carpinus	Burns well.	3
Horse Chestnut	Aesculus Hippocastanum	A fairly poor firewood.	2
Larch	Larix	A very poor firewood which spits excessively while burning and leaves an oily soot in the chimney. Provides a good heat.	1
Lime	Tilia	Poor quality firewood.	1
Oak	Quercus	One of the best types of firewood. When seasoned well, it gives off a good, lasting heat. Burns reasonably slowly.	4
Pear	Pyrus	If well-seasoned it burns nicely with a pleasant smell.	3

Pine	Pinus	Burns hot but needs to be well seasoned. Leaves an oily soot in the chimney and spits excessively.	1
Plane	Platanus	A reasonable quality firewood.	3
Poplar	Populus	Very poor firewood. Burns with a poor heat and only usable when well-seasoned.	1
Rowan	Sorbus Aucuparia	Burns well.	3
Spruce	Picea	Low quality.	2
Sweet Chestnut	Castanea Sativa	Burns when seasoned but spits continuously and excessively. Not for use on an open fire and make sure wood-burning stoves have a good door catch!	1.5
Maple (including Sycamore)	Acer	Burns well.	3
Walnut	Juglans	Poor quality firewood.	2
Wellingtonia	Sequoiadendron	Very bad quality.	1
Willow	Salix	A high water content means it needs to be well seasoned.	2.5
Yew	Taxus	Usable.	2.5

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