



Lumber: A Starter Guide

*Your starter guide to the basics
of lumber for building projects.*

At J&W Lumber, we've been experts in quality redwood lumber for over five decades. While our roots are in redwood, we've branched out into a variety of wood and lumber options in order to fit any form, function, style, budget, and project.

Redwood, Cedar, Douglas Fir, architectural timbers, engineered wood products, pressure treated lumber – with so many options, how do you pick the right lumber or wood product for your project?

We've got you covered. In this starter guide, we cover the basics on the most popular lumber options and the fundamentals on each type of lumber.

Redwood Lumber: Beautiful, Natural, Durable

Trees are impressive – natural wonders that inspire awe and that have been the lifeblood of human kind since we started forming communities.

Redwood lumber has been, and continues to be, a very popular option for many outdoor building projects for a variety of reasons. For starters, it's a renewable resource.

Redwood makes a great choice for a project because it is:

- A beautiful, unique color
- A natural wood
- Durable
- Resistant to rot and termites
- Easy to maintain
- Resistant to checking and warping
- Inexpensive to restore
- Meets many fire codes in California

Other reasons that make Redwood a good choice are that it can increase your home's value and can be used for a variety of different projects. For example, redwood can be used for the top of a deck, house siding, fencing, and patio covers. Staining redwoods is typically very easy to do and the wood is comfortable when used as a walking surface.





Cedar: Naturally Decay & Bug Resistant

Cedar produces a naturally lovely lumber that has a variety of great attributes. It is available from J&W Lumber in two different types, West Red Cedar or Alaskan Yellow Cedar. Each type of Cedar has unique properties and appeals to different preferences.

Western Red Cedar

Western Red Cedar lumber is a great choice for a variety of outdoor building projects. Considered one of the world's most beautiful woods, Western Red Cedar is naturally decay and bug resistant. Common uses include decks, fences, siding, and patio covers.

Several of the many benefits of Western Red Cedar include:

- It doesn't "bleed" like other woods
- It is an ideal surface for stains, sealers, and paints
- It's a light wood
- It is durable
- Many people find it easy to work with
- Is considered a sustainable lumber supply

Alaskan Yellow Cedar

Alaskan Yellow Cedar (AYC) is popular and known for its distinct uniform yellow color. It is a good option for both indoor and outdoor projects including patio covers, decks, gardens, trim, and paneling.

Other reasons why AYC is a great choice for a range of projects are:

- It's inherently strong
- Has fine, even texture and straight grain
- It is durable
- Can withstand the elements
- Is harder than most commercial softwoods
- Can be used near water (in boat buildings, bridges, etc.)
- Is resistant to decay

Both Western Red Cedar and Alaskan Yellow Cedar are excellent options for outdoor projects, particularly where strength and durability are necessary. As all naturally decay-resistant woods, they are a great investment for the long-term.

Douglas Fir: Strong & Straight-Grained

A very popular lumber option for homeowners and contractors is Douglas Fir. Its popularity is due to the fact that it is one of the more common tree species in the United States and because it is very easy to work with.

Douglas Fir is a great option for a variety of indoor and outdoor project because it is:

- Available in a variety of sizes and lengths
- Strong and great for adding structural support
- Beautiful as an exposed design element
- Able to be easily stained or painted
- Durable and versatile

Whether you are looking to create a beautiful indoor ceiling, an outdoor patio cover, or a backyard pergola, Douglas Fir offers a versatile, sturdy option. Typically, it is available in a wide range of sizes from 2x2's to 12x12 timbers. It's also available in lengths up to and exceeding 30 feet in length. Douglas Fir has a clear tight knot pattern and works well as an exposed design element in a home or commercial space.



Architectural Timbers: The Long and Short

Architectural timbers are quickly becoming a popular building material for homeowners who want to bring the impressive nature of large lumber to the comforts of home. Timbers, in essence, are the same as traditional lumber – only much bigger. More of the original slice of wood is preserved in oversized pieces and beams.

While it doesn't have the flexibility of use that traditional lumber enjoys, it is preferable for certain types of projects due to its impressive, bold appearance. Wood that is considered a "timber" comes from the same source trees as smaller lumber. It is available in Redwood, Western Red Cedar, Alaskan Yellow Cedar, Douglas Fir and just about any other standard construction wood. Each type of wood has its own benefits and features.



Douglas Fir is one of the strongest timbers available and its workability, strength, and beauty make it the most popular choice for construction projects.

Redwood is durable, gorgeous and a California classic – not to mention one of the state's most renewable resources. Redwood timbers bring an undeniable richness to any project and any home.

Western Red Cedar is one of the world's most beautiful woods. Add that to the fact that it's decay and bug resistant, light, durable and easy to work with, and you have an unmatched timber for any project.

Alaskan Yellow Cedar is known for the beauty of its uniform yellow color, the strength of its fine even-texture and straight grain, and durability in outdoor applications, making it a great choice for large timber projects.

Get Inspired

Architectural timbers are big woods for big projects. They create truly grand structures that convey a powerful, natural presence - projects that are bold and memorable.

Here are a few projects that use architectural timbers:

Patio Covers

Utilizing long, uncut woods gives you the ability to build taller, bigger, and more visually stunning patio covers.

Retaining Walls

Building a retaining wall using timbers not only creates a more natural look, but makes for a stronger wall as well. They will last longer, too, as the lack of breaks in the construction help keep the structure stable.

Exposed Ceilings

Today, the open beam ceiling is functional and visually desirable. With architectural timbers, you can give your home a rustic look that will last a lifetime.

Mantles

Building a mantle out of a single piece of timber, as opposed to piecing together multiple boards, is a great option. With a single piece of wood, each eye and imperfection stand out to create a unique piece.





Get the Facts on Engineered Wood

The term “engineered wood” seems a bit of an oxymoron. Wood, after all, is designed and built entirely by a little corporation called Mother Nature. It’s natural and perfect – for the most part.

As is our nature as humans, though, we have set out to engineer a better, stronger wood. Engineered wood retains the characteristics of natural wood, while adding a dash of technology to improve the product – like strengthening structures in the case of engineered wood.

What is engineered wood?

Engineered wood (or composite wood, man-made wood, or manufactured board) combines a variety of wood types, ground into particles, and bonds them together with manufactured fibers and adhesives to create a precise design capable of meeting the unique needs of certain construction projects.

There are a variety of different materials and methods used to create engineered wood – each need calls for a different type of product. Engineered wood is also built to meet the national and international standards for construction material.

Where is engineered wood used?

Engineered wood is particularly useful for large structures that require large, continuous and pliable beams. School gymnasiums, convention halls, large towers with atriums – any large and open structure will benefit from using engineered wood. Engineered wood is a great option for flooring too – it provides strength, durability and beauty.

Why use engineered wood?

It all comes down to your needs for span and strength. Say, for instance, you need multiple 100-foot long beams to build a brand new gymnasium. If you were to use natural wood, you’d need to cut down multiple 100-foot Redwood trees (not recommended) and then somehow cut and bend each trunk perfectly to fit your design (impossible). Engineered wood solves the problem. It can be constructed, cut and molded to meet the exact specifications of the job at hand.

What does engineered wood look like?

It looks like wood. The best part – it can be designed to look like any type of wood, in any color, to match a design concept. Engineered woods were created for both structural flexibility and visual appeal. You could use metal beams to get the necessary strength for a large structure, but wood just looks so much better!

Is engineered wood expensive?

As a rule of thumb, engineered wood costs roughly the same as traditional wood. The true price, however, really depends on the particular project and needs. In many cases, engineered wood can be cheaper than traditional wood.

What types of engineered woods are available?

Lots of different types of engineered wood are available. You can choose the right combination of look and function for just about any project. Here's a sample of some popular engineered woods:

Glulam Beams offer superior strength and span over a solid beam counterpart. These beams are able to support large distances, can be custom made for archways, and are available in several grades.

SolidStart Beams are used in remodels, new construction and even on manufactured homes. They help lower material and labor costs, as well as prevent callbacks. LP SolidStart LVL is extremely strong, consistent, and straight. LP SolidStart I-Joists are known for value, size, strength, and reliability.

Tru-Dry Timbers are perfect for big jobs. Utilizing a revolutionary drying process, Tru-Dry timbers remain straight, stable, and true long after installation. With uniform moisture content and the resulting stability, Tru-Dry has clear advantages over other engineered timbers.

Lamboo – engineered Bamboo – is quickly growing in the market. The technology, strength, and beauty of this product make it an easy choice for any exposed project. Lamboo achieves a high level of sustainability with this fast-growing, strong plant.





Pressure-Treated Lumber: What You Need to Know

The great outdoors can be a harsh place for wood. Any structure that you build outside of your home – be it a fence, deck, awning or a treehouse – will face constant exposure to the elements. Sun, wind, rain, snow and insects can quickly deteriorate and decay wood – and your outdoor structure. That’s why you should consider utilizing pressure-treated lumber – and compatible hardware – for portions of your outdoor construction.

What is Pressure-Treated Lumber?

Most woods are susceptible to decay when four conditions are present: high moisture, favorable temperatures, exposure to oxygen, and the presence of wood fiber (which is a food source for insects). Pressure-treating wood through a process that infuses a chemical preservative into the wood removes and mitigates these conditions, allowing the wood to last for decades.

How is it made?

Wood is pressure-treated by placing raw lumber into an air-tight vacuum, which is then filled with preservative fluid and pressurized to force the fluid deep into the wood. Often, the wood is incised to increase the penetration and retention of the treatment fluid.

What types are available?

Pressure-treated lumber is available in different levels of “strength” – measured in pounds of treatment per cubic foot (LBS/CU FT). Dependent on where the wood will be used, different standards – called the Use Category System (UCS) – apply. Generally, any wood to be used above ground should have a .25 retention level, wood that will have contact with the ground (fence posts, etc.) should have a .40 retention level, while wood to be used in marine environments (docks, etc.) should have a .60 retention level.

What About Hardware?

Pairing treated wood with un-treated metal hardware can have disastrous consequences. Any metal fastening hardware (screws, etc.) must also be “treated” when used with pressure-treated lumber. The process, of course, is different but incredibly important. Failure to use the right hardware with pressure-treated wood will make your construction susceptible to erosion and even failure.

The most effective hardware for use with pressure-treated lumber are fasteners that have been galvanized via “hot-dipping.” This process coats steel and other metal fasteners with a layer of zinc that prevents them from corroding when touching the ACQ chemicals present in the wood. While there are various methods for galvanizing hardware, J&W Lumber recommends products that utilize hot-dipping (Simpson and FastenMaster products are great options), as the process creates a metallurgical bond between the zinc and the metal.

All Your Lumber Needs

Your outdoor construction can provide you with a lifetime of good times and great memories – BBQs on your deck with family and friends, the joy of watching your kids play in their treehouse, the fence that keeps your nosy neighbors out and your loyal dog in. But you have to use the right construction materials. If you do, you’ll extend the life of your projects.

To learn more about how to create the perfect outdoor project using the right lumber, visit your local J&W Lumber store.

Contact J&W Lumber Today!

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