

What is this stuff? *Wood Identification Resources*

The last time I felt the need to positively identify a wood sample was in wood technology lab final exam in forestry school. My forestry career was spent growing trees and my woodworking hobby was based on making wood flat and square. Now that I have been infected with turning various chunks of road kill and dump wood, I find myself once again asking *what is this stuff?*

There are resources to help answer this question. Googling "wood identification" will give about 10 pages containing 1340 entries.

Two books show up as standard references for amateurs.

Identifying Wood: accurate results with simple tools

By R. Bruce Hoadley
1990; Taunton Press

Identifying Wood will answer the question if you are willing to learn some wood anatomy. Looking at a clean cut cross section (transverse) with a 10x hand lens one should be able to identify common woods by using the keys found in this book.

Just as I remember from class, diffuse porous wood is harder to ID than ring porous wood. The book contains a key for each group of anatomical types. One appendix even covers rotted wood and charcoal. There is a limited section on some of the imported exotics that we love to spin.

With some practice and a few known samples, one can reasonably expect to identify many woods with this book. This is the best and most complete for the non-professional.

What Wood is That? A Manual of Wood Identification

By Herbert L. Edlin
1969 Viking Press

This book is unique in the 40 actual veneer samples bound in the book. It is British with emphasis on British terminology and European and African woods. It also differs from Hoadley's book in offering 14 different keys based on both anatomical details and gross characteristics such as color, smell, leaf shape, bark, and country of origin. It is not very good for North American wood.

It is not bad for major commercial species from Africa and tropical America. It can be found used on the internet for \$15-\$20.

Two other books are used in university level wood technology courses.

[Wood Structure and Identification.](#)
H.A. Core, W.A. Cote and A.C. Day.
Syracuse University Press, 1976

[Textbook of Wood Technology, 4th edition.](#)
A.J. Panshin and C. deZeeuw.
McGraw-Hill, 1980.

If you are interested in identifying mostly local species then there are several freebies on the internet that may serve your purposes.
<http://www.agcom.perdue.edu/~agcom/Pubs/FNR/FNR-43.html> **How to Identify Some Common Indiana Woods**, W.L. Fix and D.L. Cassens, Perdue University Extension Service
A key allows identification of 16 species of wood.

<http://www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/pbfiles/PB1692.pdf> **Wood Identification for hardwood and softwood species native to Tennessee**, B. Bond and P. Hamner, University of Tennessee
General instructions on wood anatomy and an identification key.

<http://www.ag.iastate.edu/departments/forestry/ext/pubs/F-305.pdf> **Forestry Extension Notes Wood Identification**, Iowa State University.
This is just a key without introductory text. It would be handy for quick id after some practice to learn anatomy. The species list is typical for an undergraduate wood technology course.

<http://legacy.ncsu.edu/classes/wps202/002/hrdwood.htm> **WPS 202. Wood Anatomy and Properties HARDWOOD ANATOMY**, E.A. Wheeler, North Carolina State University
This document outlines some features of hardwood anatomy. The lists of features have links to images illustrating that feature
<http://www.cefts.org/woodwebpage/files/frame.htm> **Wood Identification Study Guide for Forest Technology Students**, Jeff Dubis, University of Maine at Fort Kent.

Cross-sectional images are included for 30 species. Important macro-features useful for identification

purposes are indicated and described in each image

http://homepage.uibk.ac.at/homepage/c717/c717189/eng/wood_eng.html

This is the wood id page of Andreas Heiss an Austrian archeobotanist at the University of Innsbruck, it covers hundreds of European and North American species. To use it, it must be downloaded on your machine as directed. It can then be used interactively based on the anatomy of your sample.

<http://www.biologie.uni-hamburg.de/b-online/wood/english>

This database contains descriptions and an interactive identification system for hardwood taxa common in the international trade that occur in all major forest regions of the world. The package has been elaborated and is being maintained at the Federal Research Centre for Forestry and Forest Products, Hamburg, Germany. It was created with the intent to facilitate identification of trade timbers and information retrieval about their wood structure for use by individuals and institutions who do not dispose of a large institutional wood collection.

The database contains at present the coded descriptions of approximately 340 taxa (trade timbers).

Good for many tropical species. This is the only place where I could find an anatomical description of *Paulownia tomentosa*.

http://www.gilmerwood.com/sample_image_categories.htm

A commercial supplier's site with wood sample images of many commercial species both local and imported. There also short courses in wood identification from many of the land grant universities that offer forestry education. If one is interested in wood id, in addition to wood as a resource it has application in forensics, archeology. Museum conservation, and restoration.

I will be bringing my id kit to CAW meetings and enhancements. If anyone has mystery wood or wants to give wood id a try, I will be available

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