

# WOOD BURNING GUIDE

All wood burns better if it has been seasoned. In simple terms, the word 'seasoned' means 'dry' and the term 'green' means 'freshly cut from a living tree'. The general rule is the drier the wood, the better. However, if a fire is well built, most wood will burn unseasoned.

## EXCELLENT

- **Ash** – the best firewood, providing both heat and flame. Logs will burn when green, while small branches make good kindling.
- **Beech** – very good firewood if well seasoned, producing sustained heat and flame. It may give off a few sparks.
- **Blackthorn** – this native hedgerow tree produces small logs but is one of the best woods, burning slowly with good heat and little smoke.
- **Hawthorn** – another hedgerow tree that makes good firewood, burning hot and slow. Even smaller branches are worth using.
- **Oak** – old, seasoned oak gives excellent heat and burns steadily.

## GOOD

- **Maple** – good quality firewood.
- **Sycamore** – burns with a good flame and moderate heat. The thinner branches of this tree make good kindling.
- **Cedar** – good firewood if well seasoned, giving little flame but plenty of sustained heat. This makes it a good option for a cooking fire. A cedar fire also has a pleasant smell. Thinner logs and branches will burn when green.
- **Birch** – produces good heat and a bright flame, but burns quickly. Unseasoned birch will make an adequate fire if nothing else is available. Birch bark also makes excellent tinder, even if damp, as it contains natural oils.
- **Hornbeam** – good firewood that produces a hot, slow-burning fire.
- **Apple** – burns slowly and steadily with good heat but little flame, and doesn't tend to spark or spit. Like all fruit woods, it has a pleasant smell and adding a few pieces to a cooking fire gives an excellent flavour to smoked foods.
- **Cherry** – burns slowly with good heat and a pleasant scent.
- **Pear** – another fruit wood that provides good heat and gives off a pleasant scent.
- **Plum** – good heat and a pleasant scent.
- **Hazel** – a good all-rounder but burns quickly. Smaller pieces make good kindling.

## FAIR

- **Pine** – burns with a bright flame and produces a pleasant scent, but often crackles and spits. Pine is a resinous wood, so it can be used to keep a fire burning in wet weather. It also makes good kindling.
- **Laurel** – burns with a brilliant flame.
- **Rhododendron** – the thick old stems, being very tough, burn well.
- **Plane** – reasonable firewood that burns well, but can throw sparks if very dry.
- **Elm** – must be well seasoned due to its high moisture content. Burns slowly, giving constant heat, but can be smoky.
- **Holly** – burns well when seasoned, but very quickly when green.
- **Walnut** – not a common firewood, but burns with a distinctive scent.
- **Willow** – must be well seasoned and burns quickly.
- **Yew** – dense, slow-growing softwood that burns slowly with a fierce heat. The scent is pleasant, but it can spit and spark on a campfire.

## POOR

- **Douglas fir** – well seasoned Douglas fir will burn slowly and produce good heat, but in general it is unsuitable for a campfire as it gives little flame and has a tendency to produce sparks.
- **Larch** – if well seasoned it gives good heat but is liable to crackle and spit excessively.
- **Spruce** – burns quickly and produces many sparks.
- **Horse chestnut** – good flame and heating power but considered poor firewood as it spits a lot.
- **Sweet chestnut** – burns when seasoned but spits continuously and excessively, making it generally unsuitable for campfires.
- **Alder** – burns quickly and produces little heat.
- **Lime** – poor quality firewood.
- **Poplar** – burns very slowly and produces little heat. It makes poor firewood.
- **Elder** – burns quickly with plenty of smoke and produces little heat.