



## "How To Buy Local Firewood"



### Introduction

The UK Forestry Commission claims that 3.6 million barrels of oil could be saved annually by burning wood instead of oil in Britain. Managing pre-existing woodlands could yield sufficient heating fuel so as to avoid the annual emission of 400,000 tonnes of Carbon from Fossil Fuels. If we use 20% of our land for fire-wood then 40% of our homes could be warmed by wood fuel. This is a meaningful contribution to heating and CO2 sequestration. Hence, if you have it and can burn it, then you should... But only in a modern, enclosed, Stove (that can be between 70 & 90% efficient) – not an open fire.

### The Basics

Traditionally timber is harvested during the winter months and stacked in lengths, called "cords", to begin the drying process. Damp (heavy) wood is also described as "green" for obvious reasons! Cord drying can take up to a year before they are cut into firewood logs. Logs are then stored under cover for a further period. This latter process is called "seasoning" and it ensures that wood reaches its full potential on burning, releasing maximum energy into your home as heat.



### What Type of Wood?

There is little difference in the energy-per-weight between hardwoods and softwoods. However hardwoods are more dense than softwoods so buying a cubic meter of hardwood would yield more heat than the same volume of softwood. Dry hardwoods (ie, Ash) produce excellent heat with a nice flame and lasts reasonably well. Hardwoods like Beech and Sycamore are good firewoods giving good heat but can occasionally give off sparks. Well seasoned (2 years min) softwoods (ie, Larch) make a very efficient fuel when used in stoves.

### How much will I need?

Buy a small amount at first and then slowly increase your purchases until you get the experience. Buy in the spring/summer & get logs seasoned for 1 to 2 years. Always buy by volume (cubic meters). If a house requires 18,000kWh (research your Gas Bills) per year it will need 8 cubic meters of seasoned hardwood. However a **single room stove should only need 1 tonne/yr = 2 cubic meters/yr**. If you buy in 35kg bags then that is 28 bags. Unseasoned logs will be 1 tonne per cubic meter, hardwood Beech logs, air dried for 2 years, will be 0.65 tonnes whilst softwood Conifer logs, air dried for 2 years, will be 0.45 tonnes.



### 10 Questions to Ask Your Firewood Merchant

1. **Do you supply hardwood, softwood or a mixture?** *Hardwood is best & normal*
2. **Where was it felled – is it local?** *Local is best and most common.*
3. **How many months as Cords (between felling and splitting)?** *Not really important.*
4. **How many months seasoned (from splitting until sale)?** *Aim for 14 to 24 months*
5. **Method of delivery** *Do you prefer small bags, loose load, dumpy bag, box?*
6. **Price of delivery?** *Assume free if local.*
7. **Price includes VAT @ 5%?** *Assume yes.*
8. **Average size of logs?** *They must fit your stove!*
9. **Quotes for cubic meters – do you mean solid, stacked or loose?** *Assume solid.*
10. **Volume, advanced-buying of Summer-buy discounts?**

One final thing: do NOT buy your wood fuel in bags from a Petrol Station or Garden Centre. This is very very expensive and you cannot guarantee what you are buying. Shop around for a good price & supplier you can trust. Everything else being equal - use the supplier closest to you.



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### Delivery

Most small operators can only deliver between 1 to 1.5 cubic meters on the back of a pickup. Delivery is normally always free (but do check). Commonly you will find that the loose load will be tipped onto your front lawn or driveway. You then have to move it and stack it yourself. This may be difficult for the elderly or people with disabilities. If you don't have this space then you can get deliveries in small netted bags allowing you to quickly move the load elsewhere by hand. Some suppliers (for a small charge) will stack the loose load for you. Others can supply it "loose" but in a very large 'dumpy' bag (like Builder's Merchants use for sand).

### Stacking & Storage Space

If you need 6 cubic meters then that needs 8 cubic meters or more of storage capacity (ie, add 40% to what you buy to estimate the storage space). Tightly stacked logs it will take up a lot less space. Keep your wood dry with a covering but allow air to circulate around the sides. Do not stack more than 2 m high. Depth of stack should be no more than 2.5 meters deep.

### Further Reading

- Chris Laughton's "Home Heating with Wood" (CAT).

### Conclusion

Starting off into the world of wood-burning can be very daunting. How much do I need? Where do I get it from? Am I getting value-for-money? We hope we have answered your questions and made the job a little easier. It is important to get a good supplier for your fuel – one you can trust. The right choice will save you a lot of money, a lot of work and will give you much added warmth this winter.

In our opinion our local suppliers are all excellent but some are very small operators who do not deal with cubic meters of supply. Hence shopping around can be frustrating as it is very difficult to compare like for like. All will supply locally felled hardwoods seasoned for a good long time. There is little doubt that they are all trustworthy and offer a quality product. However the price does vary widely so shop around.

Wood fuel does not have the convenience of Electricity & Gas. It needs special storage & handling. However it is nearly carbon-neutral plus it is a local resource. You are enhancing your resilience and declaring independence from Fossil Fuels.... and that is priceless. Keep up the good work.

### Local Suppliers

- **Bryants** 01494 482365, Lower Church St, Stokenchurch, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 3TG
- **Landmark Tree Surgery** 01483 811791 in Windsor. [www.landmarktreesurgery.co.uk](http://www.landmarktreesurgery.co.uk)
- **Lindum Tree Services Ltd** 01628 671751, 36, Norden Rd, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 4AY
- **Blaze Firewood Ltd** 01753 648081, Hicknaham Farm, Littleworth Rd, Burnham, Slough, Berkshire SL1 8PG. [www.blazelogs.com](http://www.blazelogs.com)
- **Edginton's Firewood Merchants** 01494 880046/07802 695218, Beacon Farm, Marlow Rd, Marlow, Bucks SL7 3DQ
- **Widlogs** 07973 347 664 [www.widlogs.co.uk](http://www.widlogs.co.uk) Merecroft, Widmere Farm, Marlow, Bucks SL7 3DF

Also see our supplementary (and FREE!!) "Local Firewood Supplier Survey" Factsheet for more information about these local suppliers.

**The TTHW Team.**