

FIREWOOD INFO PACK

PREPARED BY >



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To order firewood please call the sales office on 8543 3400

Different types of firewood

Different woods burn differently. Some burn slowly, some burn quickly, some produce good coals, some don't, some throw sparks and some don't. This section will describe the different type of wood available and how they react when burnt in your heater.

Dense Australian Hardwoods: Ironbark is a premium grade dense hardwood carried by BC Sands. It is a superior wood that burns slowly with intense warmth, forms excellent coals, and has little or no smoke.

Medium Density Firewood: This grade of wood includes Blue Gum, Peppermint and Red Stringybark to name a few. These species are more popular in areas where dense hardwood is not available. They still form relatively good coals, but tend to burn quicker and throw more sparks than dense hardwood.

Low Density Firewood: This grade includes mainly softwood species such as Radiata Pine and low density hardwoods such as Mountain Ash and thinnings and prunings from fast growing Eucalypts. Being softwood or low density these woods tend to be easy to split and ignite producing high heat output as they burn quickly. These properties make this species very good for use as kindling to help start the fire but not much else. They tend to produce virtually no coals and caution should be exercised as they throw off a lot of sparks as they burn.

The Certification Scheme – Environmental Firewood Suppliers

Collecting firewood is one of humankind's oldest activities. Australians enjoy the beauty and warmth of a wood fire, and they remain a popular source of heating in many parts of the country but many firewood users are unaware of the ecological price of collecting dead trees and fallen logs. It is now recognised that the removal of this wood is contributing to a significant loss of wildlife habitat in some areas – particularly in the woodlands of southeastern Australia.

For this reason the federal government brought in the National Certification Scheme for firewood merchants. To become a Certified Environmental Firewood Supplier the merchant must agree to abide by a national voluntary code of practice that is designed to promote the sustainable use of firewood by ensuring merchants obtain wood from sources that do not threaten the conservation of flora and fauna in forest and woodland ecosystems.

BC Sands sources all our firewood from a Certified Environmental Firewood Supplier so you can be sure that any firewood you purchase from us has been collected legally and according to sustainable management principles to protect the environment. This code also states that where practical the merchant will supply seasoned firewood with a moisture content of less than 25%, which brings us to our next section.

Moisture Content and Seasoning of Firewood

Moisture Content – Wet Wood = Less Heat – More Smoke.

Wet Wood: When a living tree is felled, about 50% of its weight is water. Over time the water evaporates until it reaches equilibrium with the surrounding air. Once this equilibrium is reached the wood will contain about 15% water by weight. This is known as air-dry or seasoned wood and usually takes about 12 months depending on conditions. All BC Sand's firewood has been seasoned or air-dried for a minimum of 2 years to ensure top quality at all times.

Why do I need wood dried for so long?

If wood is not sufficiently dried before use it burns un-efficiently and usually produces a lot of smoke. A 2kg log of 'green' (unseasoned) wood contains about 1 ltr of water. Imagine the energy (lost heat) it takes to boil dry 1 ltr of water in a saucepan – this is the equivalent to energy wasted trying to burn 'green' wood. The heat needed to burn wet wood also means that the fire burns a lot cooler. This leads to less combustion therefore, more smoke. More smoke means more build up of creosote in your flue or chimney, which we will discuss later.

Storage of your Firewood

If you have bought seasoned wood it should be kept dry and stored off the ground to prevent moisture being drawn up into the wood. Bexley Caringbah Sand Supply's big bag is a good way to store your seasoned wood as it can be covered from the weather and the bag limits the amount of moisture drawn from the ground. A spray of Baygon into the bag will also prevent insects from setting up home in there as well.

If you prefer to have your wood delivered in bulk and stack it yourself a well ventilated, covered location, preferably with exposure to the sun (a wood shed with an open side, to the north) is best. If a woodshed is unavailable, wood stored in the open with a secured waterproof cover will suffice (plastic or corrugated iron). The wood should be stored off the ground (on a pallet or bricks) and a crisscross stacking pattern allows for greater air circulation to promote drier firewood.

Firewood should never be stored against a house as it allows a bridge for termites and in case of bush fires sparks may ignite the woodpile and therefore your house. If your seasoned firewood is wetted by rain it will dry out in a few days if moved undercover. So if your wood is delivered in the rain or gets wet before you can put it away don't worry. Bexley Caringbah Sand Supply's firewood is well seasoned and will dry out in a couple of days after you cover it up.

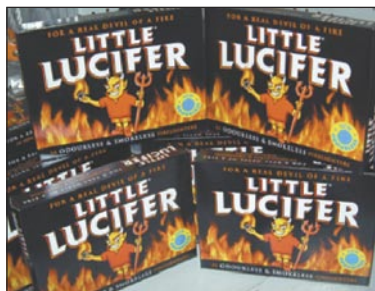


Some quick tips for lighting and maintaining an efficient fire

- Make sure the wood is dry.
- Use sufficient kindling to establish a hot fire quickly and always open air vents fully.
- Use smaller logs to get the fire established.
- Run your heater on a high burn rate for the first 20-25 minutes of operation.
- Do not overfill the heater and allow air to circulate between the logs.
- Use larger logs for slower burning once the fire is established.
- Do not block the incoming air supply with logs
- If fuel load has burnt down to only a few glowing coals, re-kindle quickly with some small wood and a bit of newspaper.
- Don't turn your fire down (limit the air supply) until it is well established with red coals

Firewood Accessories

BC Sands has a range of firewood and wood heater accessories available to help with everything from getting the fire going to putting it out if it gets out of control. We have extra long matches, Jiffy & Little Lucifer fire lighters, a range of axes and block splitters and even single use fire extinguishers in case the un-thinkable does happen. If you would like advice on any of these products please give us a call.



Choosing a Wood Heater

When purchasing a wood heater make sure it meets the current Australian Standards. Ask the retailer for the official smoke emission test results for each heater and choose a cleaner burning model; also check the efficiency rating. Combustion type wood heaters are much more efficient and effective than open fireplaces therefore they burn much less wood and create a much warmer environment. It is also important to choose the right size heater. A heater too large for an area will have to be 'turned down' too often and too small a heater can result in over-firing, thus shortening the life of the heater.

Heater Maintenance

Well-operated heaters should produce very little smoke. It will keep your home warm and neighbours happy. It is important to keep your heater and flue in good working order. If your heater is getting hard to light, or is producing too much smoke, it could be a build up of creosote (a complex chemical compound including tar and soot) in the flue. Check your flue annually and, if necessary, have it cleaned. It is best to have your heater serviced during spring or early summer. This minimises the corrosive effects of creosote residues and condensation during the off season. If your wood heater is still producing too much smoke, arrange an inspection by a professional; there may be something wrong with it that needs repairing.