

Monaro Timber

NEWS

46 - 48 Townsville St Fyshwick ACT
Ph 02 62806467 Fax 02 62806487

The monthly newsletter from
Monaro Timber Pty Ltd

Volume 3, Issue 11

Moisture in timber.

November 2004

I was reading through my Wood in Australia book by Keith Bootle recently and found a passage that said "A thorough understanding of the wood-water relationship is essential to efficient use of wood as a structural and decorative medium". In essence, wood moves and we need to understand this if we are to use it successfully. I find more people getting into trouble with their timber in the warmer months because we have periods that can be very hot and dry followed by hot wet periods which create very high humidity. As humidity changes timber will either draw in or expel moisture. Although timber may be deemed dry it still has a moisture content. As the moisture content varies so does the physical size of the board. This is best seen in a timber floor which will periodically show small gaps as it dries and then tighten up again as it swells with the uptake of water. The first step in dealing with timber movement is to understand it will take place. This helps deal with the heart ache of a small gap between floor boards. Secondly, making sure the timber is at a moisture content close to that which is expected in service. Finally, design with timber movement in mind and allow for it. People often say to me "the timber is kiln dried, so it won't move will it?" Wrong, it always moves. I usually reply by asking if they have ever lived in a house with traditional timber doors. Most people have at some stage in their lives. I then

ask, "what happened to the door when it rained for awhile?" It gets stuck in the jamb when it swells. That's dry timber moving with a humidity change. Making sure the timber is at the right moisture content before use is not so straight forward. Because our homes fluctuate in humidity levels we can only aim for an average M/C. In Canberra that seems to be around 8-11%. On the coast it will be higher. For some components such as pergola posts we often use green timber. Design starts to play an important role here. Also, if you are building something in Canberra allow for the possibility of it ending up in Sydney. You must allow for probable expansion of the timber. Conversely, if you are on the coast you must consider what will happen to the piece if it ends up in a drier area. Following all the best practice, alternating growth rings, insisting on quarter sawn boards, or using any other special tricks will not help much if your design is lousy. There are plenty of good references on timber, moisture and movement. If you are using timber it's worth reading up a bit. If you have any specific questions feel free to ask and I'll do my best to help out.

Ironbark.

Last month I listed a number of timbers and their uses. I thought it would be a good idea to continue with a few more. We have Ironbark available in a few products. Rough sawn furniture boards in 150 x 25. This is Grey Ironbark but one thing you need to know is Grey Ironbark can have red boards and Red Ironbark can have grey / brown boards.

The names relate to the species. Having said that, we do find the Red Ironbark is predominantly red. We also stock flooring and decking in this species. It is super hard, comes in at around 1200kg / m³. This makes it around 2.5 times denser than Radiata Pine. It is a class one durability timber, which is as good as it gets. This makes it excellent outside and borers generally won't touch it as it's too hard. Hard to work but polishes beautifully.

Coachwood.

We have limited stocks of this once common timber. It has a pale pinkish brown heartwood and a very distinctive "caramel" odour. It works very well and was once used for just about everything in joinery. Now it tends to be used for restoration but is worth checking out for a new project if you haven't tried it yet.

New Stock.

Excellent stocks of Tassie Blackwood from a new supplier. This timber is well worth looking at. Some of the best we have seen. Also new in is more Hoop Pine, up to 250mm wide, Jarrah, Baltic Pine, 25mm Blue Gum, Tas Oak, Vic Ash, Rock Maple and more. Want an English Yew slab? Move it up, we sold several last month so there are less to choose from. If you are building a deck, talk to us about some great options.

Till next month

Shaun.

Monaro Timber. We do almost anything in timber!