



Monaro Timber News

The monthly newsletter from Monaro Timber Pty Ltd

February 2007

Warm weather and timber.

A while back we discussed the issues of timber and how it reacts, especially with the current dry conditions. The few wet days we have had, including the big down pours and hail etc, have had no on going effect on what we call the equilibrium moisture content (EMC) of the timber in our environment. The EMC is the moisture content of the timber when it has stabilized to the surrounding conditions. Currently, in the Canberra area, the EMC in an uncontrolled indoors environment is around 7 to 8 %. It takes timber some time, in some cases many weeks, to adjust to a new EMC, so a short burst of wet weather usually has no measurable effect. What does this mean for new timber coming into the area? Well, saw mills usually aim for around 12% moisture content when they dry timber. This is a reasonable figure to aim for given the final destination of the timber is usually unknown. It could end up anywhere in Australia or possibly overseas. The EMC for Canberra would be quite different to that of say Batemans Bay most of the time. After timber arrives in a new environment it will adjust to the EMC. As I said, this can take awhile. This point is worth bearing in mind if you are looking at timber flooring. Laying a floor at an moisture content significantly above the EMC usually means you will have a good deal of shrinkage in the future. The rough rule for 80 x 19 Aussie hardwood flooring is, for every 4% decrease in moisture content you can expect around 1mm of shrinkage. This is why measuring the moisture content on delivery is important, then the decision to acclimatize or not can be made.

Timber used for furniture can present problems too.

Volume 6, Issue 2

Timber tops especially require some care. As timber dries, it shrinks, and it dries faster at the ends than it does in the middle. Therefore, tops and panels run the risk of cracking on the ends first. A coating of oil or lacquer helps to slow down the rate of moisture loss and can reduce or eliminate splitting. The ends of raw timber should be treated carefully. It is worth taping with cello tape or applying a finish early to protect the ends before completion of the job. As soon as possible after construction the job should be properly coated.

At this point it is also worth addressing the issue of fixing panels and tops down to cabinets etc. As the moisture content changes timber either shrinks or expands, but only across the grain. The board won't get longer or shorter. When attaching a top to a cabinet it is important to allow for movement across the grain by using flat headed screws and elongated or oversize holes. This is simple stuff every cabinetmaker should know from their training but it is amazing how many get it wrong, OFTEN. As I write this I am reminded of the customer who once attached two lovely boards of cedar to a table base with four inch nails driven through the top. The boards, not glued together, shrunk and I was blasted for selling wet timber !! This expert wasn't going to listen to any cabinetmaking tips from me. I believe he did colour match his putty in the nail holes very well !! The bottom line is timber moves and in extreme climatic conditions there are added challenges. Take care.

New Stock.

A number of fresh stocks have arrived including 200 x 25 Brush Box and 38mm Blue Gum. We have Tassie Oak due in any day and more Jarrah to top up depleted racks. We also have the following flooring and decking on offer, until it is sold.

Jarrah Flooring select grade @ \$73.00 / m²

Tas Oak Flooring select grade @ \$50.00 / m²

Blackbutt Flooring standard @ \$55.00 / m²

Spotted Gum decking 86 x 19 @ \$51.00 / m²

There are a number of other specials on various flooring. Call us for details.

That's all for another month.

Regards *Shaun*

Questions or comments? E-mail us at shaun@monarotimber.com.au or call 02 62806467
Drop in at 46-52 Townsville St Fyshwick. Open 8.00—4.30 weekdays.
8.00—12 noon Saturdays
