



HOW TO STACK AND STORE FIREWOOD

For wood-burning fireplace and stove owners, stacking wood is an important skill to know. Whether it's your first time stacking a woodpile or you just want a refresher course on proper wood storing technique, we've got some helpful tips on the best way to stock winter wood.

WOOD STACKING

GROUNDWORK

What's the best way to stack all those wood pieces? There are a few options. Depending on the amount of wood, a pre-built wood rack might be a quick and easy option. If you choose a pre-built rack, purchase one that is sturdy and will keep your wood pieces elevated off the ground. Regardless of what type of woodpile is built, be sure that the ground is level and dry. If stacking wood outdoors, choose an area that has proper drainage so that water does not pool around the woodpile. Also choose an area that keeps the woodpile out of direct rainfall, such as under an overhang. If the wood must be stored out in the open, place a tarp over the top of the pile.



STACKING TECHNIQUE

Try to stack your wood loosely enough that air can blow through. And remember, wood pieces will shrink and shift as they dry throughout the year, so make sure that all pieces are well-secured within the pile and can allow for some minor shifting. To help prevent rotting, try placing a base of treated two-by-fours under your pile to elevate it off the ground. This will prevent moisture from being absorbed into the base and wood stack. Shipping pallets, while great base structures, are made from untreated wood and will typically rot after a few years.



WOOD PILE STRUCTURES

There are several established types of firewood structures you can choose. Ultimately, your storage space will determine which structure works best for you. Regardless of what structure type you choose, ensure your stacking technique allows for proper airflow and is stable enough to allow for significant settling - wood pieces shrink as they dry.



The most basic structure is the "simple stack", which consists of rows of wood pieces with a vertical stop at one or both ends of the stack. This stop can be either a 2x4 board, or even a column of wood pieces arranged in perpendicular rows.



Another popular structure is the "round stack". This approach consists of vertical rows of wood in a circular configuration, meaning one end of the wood pieces all meet in the centre of the circle in a starburst pattern. This type of stack is more compact, but the reduced airflow can add to overall drying time.



WOOD STORING

STORING TIPS

However the wood is stacked; expect the wood to dry for at least six months before it is ready for the fireplace. Freshly cut wood can have up to 100% moisture, which means around half of its weight is water. The ideal moisture content for firewood is around 20%. How do you know if the lumber is ready? Seasoned wood will turn grey, but colour is not the only indicator. Look for hairline cracks along the edges. Seasoned wood will also weigh less and make a higher-pitched sound when knocked together. Unseasoned wood will make a low "thud" when banged together. If at all possible, keep the lumber pile sheltered from precipitation, while still exposed to airflow and sunlight. Tree bark is a natural moisture barrier, so arrange the lumber to maximize evaporation. If a lot of rain is expected, arrange the wood pieces bark side up. If there is a lot of ground moisture from snow or standing water, arrange wood pieces bark side down.



WOOD BURNING SAFETY

Burning firewood creates many by-products, including smoke, water vapour, various gases, hydrocarbons and tar. Over time, these materials can accumulate in your fireplace and increase your risk of danger, including chimney fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. Always keep your fireplace chimney well ventilated and have it cleaned. Annual maintenance and inspection of your home's heating systems, fireplaces included, are recommended.

STAY WARM AND COZY THIS WINTER!