

How “Green” Is Your Letters Section ...

Editor's Note:

Woodworker's Journal received many more letters in response to the “green” woodworking stories covered in our *April 2008* issue than would fit in our print magazine. You can find some letters there — and you can find these here.

Chicken Littles?

I don't know how I missed it, but I did miss the “green” survey. But I did read Joanna Werch Takes's *Shop Talk* article regarding the survey results [“How ‘Green’ is Your Woodworking?” *April 2008*]. Kudos to you at *WJ* for giving this important subject space in the magazine. No matter what your stance on global warming or any other environmental issue, we should all take a hard and serious look at how we use our resources and the impact we as woodworkers collectively have on these resources. We need to be informed about the impact

this hobby has on the world, and how we may be able to help conserve and protect our resources.

We should also be very mindful of the chemicals we use and how we discard them. Some people (such as survey respondent JG) may consider me a “environmental chicken-little,” and think that global warming theories are “ridiculous environmental scare tactics,” but I wonder if they ever give any thought to their children or grandchildren should the “chicken-littles” be right. I would much rather err on the side of conservation than on denying future generations the air, water, and other natural resources that some take for granted.

Just go to any lumberyard and check on the prices to see that we need to conserve what we have, and waste as



little as possible. Even if “chicken-little” is wrong, conserving is also being frugal, and at the very least we save a little money.

*Rodney Dickerson
Rabun Gap, Georgia*

In the article “How ‘Green’ is your Woodworking?” I noticed the comment by J.G. and would have to echo his sentiment: “I am sick of all the environmental chicken-littles in this world. I won't patronize or subscribe to anything that gives credence or legitimacy to global warming or other ridiculous environmental scare tactics.”

Sorry, no subscription here. I won't even give it the courtesy of a free peruse at the newsstand.

You might have been many dollars ahead to have never printed that ridiculous article.

*Rick Buchanan
via Internet*

I thoroughly enjoyed your article “How ‘Green’ Is your Woodworking.” I do



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purchase most of my wood from a friend with a sawmill and about 90 acres of woodlands. I know that he cuts only in a sustainable manner — cutting trees that show signs of disease or that have been damaged by drought or lightning, etc. But I must admit that I buy from him mostly because of the price he gives me and the quality of his lumber.

After reading your article, I will in the future ask more questions about the source of the wood when I am not buying from my friend. However, I am at a loss as to how one would make a “green” decision when purchasing plywood — especially veneered plywood.

Finally, a comment on JG’s comment: How utterly self-centered. I hope, for the sake of my children and future generations, that his selfish life style represents a minority of people on the planet. I, for one, would like to see more articles with key words like “green” and “woodworking.”

*Stewart F. Bush
West Jefferson, North Carolina*

Read your article on green woodworking with interest but was wondering what planet your friend J.G. is on. I also read Rob Johnstone’s article on the bubinga tree but was really impressed with T.C. Knight’s tutorial and would like to see these articles on a monthly basis.

*P. Kozlowski
Scherz, Texas*

Editor Responds: You’re in luck. Forester T.C. Knight’s articles appear with the story in each issue on a featured wood.

To hear from other



foresters, read on ...

The Wood in the Woods

Thank you for your excellent awareness article hinting at some of the massive problems facing sustainable forest management — the most difficult and important of which is public awareness.

Additionally, I’d like to point out that a problem exacerbating loss of habitat due to human-induced global warming is that of the worldwide problem of illegal logging — which affects not only nations in terms of revenue and flood control but also private property owners.

Sadly, some folks are still under the mistaken impression that our world

forests are an inexhaustible resource that does not need to be managed -- which makes your article all the more timely and important.

*Rich Donahue
Huachuca City, Arizona*

My forestry career began 46 years ago. This has given me some insight into our forests and our use of forests.

In Oregon:

Our forests are about evenly divided between preservation, multi-use, and wood production.

Of our annual wood growth: on federal lands, four percent is harvested, 26 percent is lost to mortality, and 71 percent is left to grow another year; on private lands, 81 percent is harvested, two percent is



Safety First: Learning how to operate power and hand tools is essential for developing safe woodworking practices. For purposes of clarity, necessary guards have been removed from equipment shown in our magazine. We in no way recommend using this equipment without safety guards and urge readers to strictly follow manufacturers’ instructions and safety precautions.

lost to mortality, and 17 percent is left to grow.

Nationwide:

We produce 64 percent of our wood consumption, export two percent of our production, and import 34 percent of our consumption

About 40 percent of our softwood is imported — mostly from the northern, boreal, old-growth forests of Canada.

Clearly, we are adding great amounts of wood — both dead and living — to the forest. (Could that explain our nation's insect epidemics and wildfire problems?)

The Forest Stewardship Council is the best known forest certification scheme. Not well known is FSC's bias against clearcut harvesting. This ignores biology, as many shade-intolerant species (e.g., Douglas fir) must have full sunlight. Creating an opening in the forest (e.g., a clearcut, wildfire, windstorms, etc.) large enough to get full sunlight to the newly planted seedling is essential if it is to survive and thrive.

LEED is the standard for sustainable construction. It favors concrete, steel, and plastic — materials that are, at best, recyclable and reusable but not renewable. They require digging a hole in the ground that will remain a hole (possibly toxic) for decades or centuries to come. LEED has a bias against wood — a recyclable, reusable, and renewable raw material. Further, wood requires far less energy to produce.



Oregon was the first state (1971) to enact a Forest Practices Act to ensure prompt and effective reforestation. It protects waters and wildlife. It limits clearcut sizes. If forest landowners follow the law, then our forests are sustainably managed.

That we've chosen to set aside so much of our highly productive forest land base and consume foreign forests brings up a question of ethics. (Other countries have their own issues regarding water, endangered species, etc.). In essence, our nation's federal forest policies have outsourced our mills, jobs, taxes and wood as well as the costs of our consumption.

Environmental groups have an agenda, and the media reports on that agenda. Together, they have done a very good job, and

educators and the public have bought into this agenda of doom and gloom.

I realize the foregoing is pretty long for a letter-to-the-editor. However, forest issues are very complex: they bring up questions of science, economics and personal values and philosophy. In other words, a paragraph or two simply cannot do it justice.

As noted at the beginning, my forestry career began in 1962 with my entry into Oregon State University's College of Forestry. Other than several years in the US Air Force in the late 60's, I've been in forestry that whole time.

I've come to conclude that most people know very little about the forest, and most of what they "know" comes from environmental groups, the media and educators. All too often, these errors of

knowledge or perception become reality and drive policy.

*Dick Powell
Corvallis, Oregon*

What About that Bubinga?

In the [April 2008] issue, you timidly raise questions (“Future Stock Selections”) about the sustainability of forest products and other “green” ramifications of woodworking. This tender concern is sandwiched between your cover story celebrating “Once-in-a-Lifetime Wood” and the article about Rocky Mehta having tripped upon a fabulous bubinga tree in Cameroon, West Africa, that he bought and sent to a German sawmill for processing.

We are told only that it “had recently been harvested.” That uninformative remark reveals nothing of the actual circumstances and context of its felling. Ignorance is supposed to be bliss. I guess we should be assuaged that Rockler, which owns and directs this “*Journal*,” will donate 10 percent of the profits from this exploitation to Nature Conservancy’s Adopt an Acre program. How nice! Redemption is complete and hypocrisy emboldened.

*Michael Holcomb
New Hope, Pennsylvania*

I am an avid wood worker and truly appreciate the magnificent and beautiful bubinga tree featured in your April issue. However, I can see absolutely no reason to kill and remove this

wonderful thing ... except money or disease. There is no way you can justify killing this tree. There was talk about management of cutting: how do you manage something 500 years old? Our local high-end lumberyard has a bigger slab of bubinga than you showed and a large slice of the trunk. This tree is over 500 years old. I agree that it will make a corporation a great conference table ... but so would many other American woods.

*Ron Altier
West Lafayette, Ohio*

Editor Responds: Some readers raised legitimate concerns about the bubinga wood featured in the April 2008 Woodworker’s Journal. First, readers should know

that bubinga is not an endangered species. Second, since the tree was already felled when lumber merchant Rocky Mehta found it, and there was no documentation concerning its harvesting, it is impossible to know what those circumstances were. The question then became, “what now?” in regard to this already-felled wood. The answer from Rockler Woodworking and Hardware was to donate 10 percent of the profits from its sale to the Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org) to aid in preserving existing rainforests.

