

Virginia Urban Wood Group

News & Updates

May 30, 2023 | Issue-18

Endless Opportunities

Last month we visited an urban/local wood business in southside Virginia and we were amazed at the production of this 2.5 person operation! Not only were they selling lumber and slabs as they came off the mill - drying them first of course - they also had a constant stream of logs coming into their holding yard provided by local tree care companies. In the short three years they have been in existence, the co-owners of this company were able to forge solid partnerships with a number of tree companies and also develop an ever-expanding customer base, without spending one dollar on advertising.

Spring has also brought with it full-bore activity in the land care industry. Once the landscape greens, landowners begin noticing invasive plants they wish were gone, trees that did not leaf-out, and areas of the property that could be growing something else besides grass, such as a new forest or wildflower meadow. The beauty of all of these land-care opportunities is that none of them should be a "one and done" business model. All of these practices require follow-up by the land care manager, be it yearly check on the progress of the project or routine maintenance to make sure that the desired project stays as intended. After all...invasive plant species will keep invading, trees will continue to die, and mom nature can quickly reclaim an established wildflower meadow if it is not maintained.

These stories present a very sunny picture of what the business economy may look like for the remainder of 2023 and into 2024. Yet we also realize this is **not** the same steamroller of an economy that we saw during the COVID pandemic years of 2020-21 when people were stuck at home, looking for projects to do or household items that needed replacing. As you might remember, this same group of people were still getting paid and yet had no where to go to spend that money. Fortunately they turned to local wood businesses and other service providers to utilize some of that extra income.

So looking at the big picture, there is still an enormous amount of new opportunities for portable sawmill businesses, local wood artisans, and land care managers. There is still a strong consumer desire to support local businesses and also an increased awareness by property owners as to what is happening on their lands.

We hope that 2023 is treating you well and welcome to the **eighteenth** edition of the Virginia Urban Wood Group's newsletter!

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Upcoming Events

“Celebrate Urban Wood’s Second Life!” Creating & Managing Collection Yards for Urban Wood Webinar

**Date: June 7, 2023
Time: 4:00pm (Eastern)**

Sponsored by:
North Carolina Urban Wood Group
Urban Wood Network

Learn about:

- Different business models meant for collecting and sorting urban wood that is harvested on municipal lands. These panelists have a wealth of experience to answer your questions and hopefully will make the creation of your own community yard

[Click here for more details & registration](#)

Coming in 2024:

The East Coast Logging & Equipment Expo!

April 12-13, 2024

New Location:

**Meadow Event Park
Doswell, VA**

More details in future VA Urban Wood
Newsletter issues!

Just Updated!

**VA Urban & Small Woodlot
Forestry Business Directory**



Virginia Urban Wood Group News

JMU Urban Wood Project x 2!

Over the the past two years, the VA Urban Wood project has been serving as an advisor and support to the James Madison University Urban Wood Program. This program has been embraced by two different JMU departments - Architectural Design and Industrial Design, each of them completing separate urban wood projects for the 2023 Spring Semester.

In early May the Architectural Design-Build Dukes dedicated a Story Walk and Reading Roost Project at the campus arboretum. All of the installations used wood from dying oak trees that had to be removed from the arboretum, were processed locally, and returned to the JMU Architectural Design class for this project.

Later in May, JMU's Industrial Design students unveiled their spring semester urban wood project. Over the past several weeks Dr. Audrey Barnes' Industrial Design class rehabilitated a nature trail and installed outdoor classroom infrastructure they created from Harrisonburg urban wood at Keister Elementary School.

We are pleased to announce a brand new edition of the service providers directory! This newest version offers an improved search tool for users to find your business, an easier portal for new businesses wishing to list in the directory and more attractive graphics which enhances the user experience.

The service providers directory includes a wide variety of businesses including portable sawmills, crafters, forestry mulchers, small parcel timber harvesters & resource managers, furniture builders and many more.

Know of a company that should be a part of this ever-growing family? Sign-up is easy and takes only a few minutes of time >>

Directory Link >>

[Additional Information](#)

News from:

**The North Carolina
Urban Wood Group**

[NC Urban Wood Group](#)

**The North Carolina Urban Wood
newsletter is available via the
website**



Member
**URBAN WOOD
NETWORK**



Reading Roost in EJC Arboretum at JMU



*Outdoor classroom table at
Keister Elementary School*

Worth the Click!

**Whiskey and Wood
Podcast**

Yes....you read that correctly, but it's not about the bourbon making industry! As the podcast host says "Why Whiskey & Wood?....Why not!" A more detailed explanation is that the the series was launched because "We wanted to highlight the incredible opportunity that the Urban Lumber market can provide for smaller sawmills, kiln operators and furniture makers".

Launched in January 2023, this podcast series features host Paul Grenier who interviews successful wood business owners to discover how they built and realized their business dreams. Paul serves in a

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Additional info >>

[Urban Wood Network](#)

UWN's latest newsletter >>

[UWN News](#)

sales role for iDry Wood Kilns.

In each episode, industry leaders share their failures, wins, and insights into their success. The website states that "Whiskey & Wood is your source for the marketing, financial, leadership, and product insights you need".

Whiskey & Wood can be found on several podcast platforms including Apple, Iheart, Spotify and Boomplay. Following is a link to Paul's website:

[Whiskey & Wood](#)

Feature Stories

Going Home in One Piece

As a long-time forest firefighter, the end goal of all of our safety trainings was to "go home at night". We wanted firefighters to both work safely and to provide as safe of a workplace as we could considering there might be a raging fire consuming acres of forest land. The mission was to control the fire and at the same time make certain that no one was seriously injured or killed while doing so.

These same safety goals should be the mantra of any business which uses equipment with exposed moving parts that can injure or kill its workers. Included on this list would be things like chainsaws, table saws, planers, forestry mulchers and finishing spray rooms. As business owners and industry leaders, we have the responsibility to ensure worker and even customer safety. We want to provide both a safe work environment and a safe place for customers to view our operations.

Sometimes the second part of that - visitor safety - is often forgotten as we go about our daily work routines. We want our customers to be able to see what we do, but keeping them safe is also important. For some businesses that may mean no one comes in the shop while the machines are operating. Equally important would be the scenario of keeping people away while trying to remove trees in their yard. It's wonderful that they want to watch, but sometimes you need to take a safety moment before felling operations begin and show them exactly where they need to stay, a place where they can see and hear the tree fall but also be completely safe.

This month we are fortunate to have three business owners supply safety tips which cover the complete process from felling a tree to creating a final product. We asked these three businesses - a tree care company, a portable sawmill and a local wood artisan - to provide the top three safety measures that they emphasize to their employees. Following their messages are links to their business websites and contact information.

Tree Felling Safety

Jack Donohue
Joe Peters



Timberworks Tree Care Front Royal, VA

One of the most dangerous jobs in the world is the felling of trees. So much can go wrong during this process if you do not take your time and follow all the safety procedures for cutting down a tree. Even with years of experience, there have been many professional loggers seriously injured or killed while cutting timber.

Jack Donohue and Joe Peters of Timberworks Tree Care have provided us with their top-5 tips for safe tree felling:



- **Scope out the tree and the area around it.** Assess all visible attributes of the tree and surrounding area, including: Tree species; Is tree dead or alive? Are there objects that can be damaged within the felling zone? Any metal or other foreign objects that could impede cutting the tree?
- **Determine Lean and Limb Weight.** Most trees either have a lean, or uneven weight distribution due to branch formation. This determines what is needed to properly fell the tree in the direction you need it to go. Trees **can** be felled opposite the lean/weighted side but this takes a highly experienced sawyer.
- **Look for an escape route.** Once you have cut the tree and it is committed into its fall, step quickly away from the falling tree. Looking for a good escape route is imperative to safely felling a tree. If there is not a safe path away from the tree it should not be felled until you establish one.
- **Always use a Face cut or Notch.** Simply making one cut through a tree can be catastrophic and gives no control to the person felling. A good face cut or notch in the right place on the trunk of the tree will help determine which way the tree will fall. Paying close attention to this step will contribute immensely to how safely the tree falls.
- **Back Cut Technique** - Equally as important to a good face cut, or notch, is the back cut technique used when felling a tree. In some cases a plunge cut should be used to keep the tree from splitting (referred to as barber chairing). How much wood is cut, or not cut, on the sides of your back cut will determine how much the wood fibers in the tree assist in the direction of the fell. Steps 4 & 5 on this list should be thoroughly researched and understood before felling large trees as knowledge of them, or lack thereof, can dramatically change the outcome of how safely you fell a tree.

Additional info about Timberworks many services can be found here >>

[Timberworks Tree Care](#)



Sawmilling Safety

Paul Garrity **Garrity Custom Sawmilling** **Chesapeake, VA**

Paul Garrity operates his sawmill about 200 days every year. If that does not impress you, he's been doing it for about 30 years. Doing the quick math, that equates to 6,000 sawmilling sessions! He has sawed every kind of wood imaginable, has created every dimension of lumber, and has probably hit every type of imbedded metal that anyone has ever inserted into a tree trunk! To say the least, Paul knows probably all there is to know about sawmilling and sawmill safety.

Following are Paul's top-5 sawmilling safety tips:

- Always wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) especially ear and eye protection
- Sawmilling always seems to include log rolling: always use a real cant hook, always roll the log away from you, and use your legs when you are rolling the logs
- Never pile the logs too high - they could roll on you
- Only engage saw blade when entering the log and disengage when exiting the log - never leave the blade spinning uncovered
- Lastly, my blade teeth cut from right to left. Bystanders and helpers need to be to the right of the mill away from the direction of the sawdust and anything I may encounter in the log

Additional info about Paul's sawmilling service can be found here >>



Garrity Custom Sawmilling

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Shop Safety

Bill St. Pierre **St. Pierre Woodworking & Sawmill** **Floyd, VA**

Bill St. Pierre has been in the sawmilling and local wood artisan business for over 20 years. With four, full-time employees he manages one of the larger local/urban wood businesses in Virginia. Bill's beautifully crafted wood pieces have found homes locally, regionally and across the work has spread across the country with XXXXX



We asked Bill to provide the top-3 safety tips for the woodworking shop:

- Good ventilation in the shop and spray booth
- Keeping trip hazards picked up and stored in the proper place
- Keeping blades sharp so your not having to force the wood



Bill added: "I feel like there are so many things to be aware of at all times in the shop but these are a few that sometimes get overlooked".

Additional info for Bill's business can be found [here >>](#)

[St. Pierre Woodworking & Sawmill](#)



Thanks!

Many thanks to Trees Virginia (Virginia's Urban Forest Council) for hosting this newsletter and allowing access to their Constant Contact platform!

Check out their website >>>

[TreesVirginia](#)

The Marketing Corner

Community Engagement

One of the keys of successful businesses is community engagement. This means of course mixing & mingling with potential customers, with the occasional, or if you really enjoy it, regular public events.

We realize that this community engagement piece of doing business would mean meeting and talking to total strangers. Some of us are really good at that, others would rather walk barefoot across a bed of hot coals. But just like when we encouraged businesses to do social media, if talking to a lot of people is not your thing, find someone to do it for you! The face of your business does not have to be you - there are many companies across the United States of local, regional and national prominence that



The Virginia Urban Wood Program is supported by the Virginia Department of Forestry with grants from the U.S. Forest Service, Southern Region.



have spokespeople for the company. The owner or president may not have the time or feel comfortable doing outreach and that's okay, but all of them has someone who does the public facing for the business.

Community engagement is especially important for new businesses arriving on the scene. This is especially true in a larger city where new businesses can easily get "lost" or not even seen in the hustle-n-bustle of urban life. One of the best examples of a business involved in community engagement over the past year has been the [Norfolk Wood Shop](#). They have really had a wonderful public presence as the staff tries to grow the business in a large metropolitan area. You can follow their adventures on Instagram or Facebook - [@norfolkwoodshop](#)

Be collaborative! One of the best ways to do public engagement is to do it with another business or organization. For example, if you are a wood artisan you might want to partner with a portable sawmiller. Even better, doing public outreach events with a couple other businesses are also usually successful in that you are tapping into their customer base/fans which will attract more people to the event. Private-public partnerships also work well in that a municipality could sponsor a workshop or a make-n-take event and your business would be one of the main attractions.

Once your business is established you might be able to reduce the number of public appearances but do not abandon them completely! You do not want your broader customer base to begin saying..."whatever happened to Woody's Wonderful World of Wood? It seems like they have disappeared!". The bottom line is that you never want people to have to go searching for your business. As a society we have grown amazingly impatient and if you are not 1-2 clicks away, people might just move on.

Virginia Urban Wood Group
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