

Virginia Urban Wood Group

News & Updates

July 31, 2024 | Issue-23

Hot & Dry = Pivoting

Last month we talked about the unfortunate realities our ever changing climate bringing with it stronger summertime storms, packed with torrential rains and strong winds. We have already seen the results of this violent weather with many tornado outbreaks across the eastern United States and of course the devastation caused by Hurricane Beryl down in Texas. Needless to say, there was a lot of storm debris to be cleared, downed trees to be milled, and depending on the size and scope of the storm, FEMA contracts to be had which can be an income boost for any small business.

Yet here in Virginia the dominating weather pattern since the last newsletter is Hot & Dry! Much of the state is now experiencing drought conditions during which the grass stops growing, turns brown and the trees experience additional stresses due to this lack of soil moisture. Add to the mix widespread spongy moth defoliation in places like the northern Shenandoah Valley which will probably lead to increased tree mortality over the next few years. How dry is it? Check-out this recent NOAA Drought Monitoring Map > [Virginia](#)

No one I know likes "hot & dry" unless of course you are a cactus growing in the desert. Hot and dry weather can bring lawn care companies to a standstill as we all watch the grass turn a crispy brown. This type of unfortunate weather pattern also means fewer plantings of trees and shrubs during the summer months since both will require a substantial amount of weekly watering just to make sure they survive that critical first year.

For many of us water is becoming a precious resource that cannot be used for the wholesale watering of lawns or large numbers of newly planted trees. If you are like me, you might be on a well with a limited capacity such that you need to make sure you prioritize water consumption for personal use or food production. Those of you living in cities also know that the price of municipal water use continues to increase such that every gallon you use results in increasingly higher water bills. Watering a couple of trees that you planted in the springtime is one thing, watering an entire lawn for the sake of seeing green when you wake-up in the morning may cost you much more than it is worth. We also need to remember that water resources are not infinite, conserve them when possible.

So the word for the day is "**Pivoting**". The sign of a well-managed business is its ability to pivot in a different direction when what they routinely do is interrupted by an uncontrollable force of nature be it a hurricane, tornados, or a prolonged drought. Those businesses which succeed have a list of projects that they can "pivot to" when the grass stops growing or it becomes too dry to plant trees and shrubs. This list for the dry times could include trail establishment and maintenance, adding fresh mulch to plantings, tree removals, forestry mulching of invasive species, and hardscaping.

Being able to pivot means keeping your team busy, engaged, and avoiding unwanted layoffs which begets the vicious cycle of having to recruit and train new workers. It also helps to guarantee consistent cash flow which can ease the mind of any business owner and avoid reducing the hours of workers or even worse, having to layoff some of your team. The last thing any of us want to do is have to recruit and then train new workers.

Maybe the takeaway message for this edition is to combine our featured word with the message from the last newsletter: **Be Prepared to Pivot.**

Welcome to the **twenty-third** edition of the Virginia Urban Wood Group's newsletter.

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Upcoming Events

Urban Wood Network's 2024 Outreach Program!

Webinar Series

2nd Wednesday of
each month
1:00-2:00PM eastern

Join this webinar series and learn about
starting and expanding your urban wood
business!

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

Date	Topic	Method
January 10, 2024	We are the Urban Wood Network	Webinar
February 14, 2024	Part A: First life of tree - We all play a part in urban wood utilization	Webinar
March 13, 2024	Developing and Improving your business	Webinar
April 13, 2024	Business Development, How to connect with designers, & Woodworking contest	In-person (Olivehurst, CA)
May 8, 2024	How anatomical features create design features	Webinar
June 12, 2024	Advertising	Webinar
July 10, 2024	Different materials to incorporate into urban wood	Webinar
August 14, 2024	Part B: Second life of tree - work competitively in collaboration	Webinar
September 11, 2024	UW & the Climate	Webinar
October 9, 2024	How do I use my tree? Success stories	Webinar
November 13, 2024	Funding, grants and investors	Webinar
December 11, 2024	USRW Standards	Webinar

Firewood Bank Funding



Virginia Urban Wood Group News

The Versatility of Urban Wood

When many people think about urban wood they immediately imagine a beautiful live edge dining table. Yet urban wood, which comes from a wide variety of tree species, lends itself to being used for many innovative and creative uses.

Recently James Madison University's Industrial Design Department is conducting a 4-week summer session entitled "Topics in Industrial Design – Skin on Frame Kayaks" where Professor Kevin Phaup leads students through the construction process resulting in the students taking home their own kayaks at the end of the class. Participants learn how proper milling techniques, wood grain evaluation, steaming wood for pliability and construction of the wooden frame. The following picture shows the framing which includes white oak bottom ribs, the long pine siderails and the top rib framing made of eastern red cedar – all sourced from urban/community wood trees. Professor Phaup is one of three cooperating faculty members at JMU

Applications due: September 1, 2024

Firewood banks are organizations which provide emergency and seasonal wood for heating homes in a given community. Similar to food banks, firewood banks can be run by nonprofits, churches and other religious organizations, state or local governments, or tribes.

For-profit firewood businesses are also eligible to apply for funding if they meet certain criteria.

Click here for details about firewood bank funding>

[Firewood Bank Funds](#)

Recently Updated!

VA Urban & Small Woodlot Forestry Business Directory

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 sawmillers, 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](#)

that regularly promotes the use and value of urban wood resources. The DOF's Urban Wood Project and members of the Va Urban Wood Group provide technical assistance and support for the JMU Urban Wood Program.



Worth the Click!

Real American Hardwood

The brand new Real American Hardwood website is definitely a must see and "worth the click"! The site highlights the beauty, functionality and sustainability of real American hardwoods and contains additional info on design concepts and the characteristics of many different native hardwoods. The site is sponsored by the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) and the National Hardwood Lumber Association (NHHLA), in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. The Real American Hardwood Coalition represents more than 2,100 companies from all of the hardwood producing states in the country. Through RAHC the domestic hardwood industry has come together to inspire and educate homeowners and design professionals.

Click here for a tour of a very well-designed website with tons of great info promoting the use of American hardwoods >

[Real American Hardwood](#)



Reusing **urban logs** keeps
carbon stored away longer!

#UrbanWoodWednesday

Start following **#urbanwoodwednesdays**
on your favorite social media account to
see more posts like those above!

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Feature Stories

Hot & Dry - Part 2

The opening message for this newsletter was about the Hot & Dry weather that Virginia was experiencing this summer. Continuing with that same theme, let's talk about Hot & Dry as it relates to wood, which by the way is a good thing!

Generally speaking, "Hot & Dry" in the wood world are exactly the conditions that wood needs to dry properly. No matter the chosen method - air drying, solar kiln drying, dehumidification kiln drying, etc - providing a hot & dry environment will help to dry the wood, making it more stable for future uses, and also helping control any critters that might want to try making sawdust out of your artistic creations. Drying wood can be easy/difficult, fun/frustrating depending upon certain situations including wood type and a whole host of other factors. For this article we are going to keep things simple and provide some basic information to help you get started with the DIY drying your own wood.

Air Drying

Air drying is a good first step into creating boards that are stable and produce a quality lumber product. Air drying wood can take place in an outdoors location or inside a structure with a roof but also good air flow. Favorite places to store wood include an old farm shed or better yet a barn where summertime temperatures can get well above 100 degrees. A few helpful hints for air drying wood:

Stacking: Make sure that your wood is stacked into manageable piles that are not too tall to become unwieldy when moving.

Stickering: Proper stickering (putting wood slats between the boards) is not only important for air drying but all other forms of drying and storing of the wood. Stickers should be aligned in straight vertical rows so that you are not producing "wavy wood".

Covering: If drying in the open, the piles can be covered with a water repellant top which will shield them from the brunt of the precipitation. Do not enclose the stacks in a plastic tarp since that will result in the molding of the wood.

[Click here for additional information about air drying wood >>](#)

[Air Drying Resources](#)



Solar Kiln Drying

The solar kiln drying of wood can be the next step up after air drying. Some wood workers skip air drying and immediately place their wood in the solar kiln. While this might be a good practice in the cooler times of the year it is not the best idea to insert freshly sawn, green wood into a solar kiln in the heat of the summer. Yes, you can dry wood too quickly which can lead to many other wood quality problems. Most of the time it is best to air dry the boards or slabs for several months before inserting them into a solar kiln. Consider the solar kiln as part of your wood drying system that might look like this: [air drying](#)>>[solar kiln](#)>>[commercial kiln drying](#).

Solar kilns are relatively easy to construct and come with a modest price tag excluding of course your sweat equity. The completed kiln should be placed in a location where the translucent solar window faces the warmer afternoon sun. The kiln should be level but also on a site that drains any surface water away from the kiln. Remember, moisture of any kind is not your friend!

Several years ago Virginia Tech perfected the DIY solar kiln and thankfully published the plans so that anyone can use them to build their own kiln, the link follows >>>

[Va Tech Solar Kiln Plans](#)



Dehumidification Kiln Drying

Despite having a slightly more complicated sounding name than the "solar" kiln, dehumidification kilns are almost just as easy to make and use. Dehumidification kilns have the same end goal as a solar kiln, that being removing moisture from the wood. Instead of using the sun as a heat source for drying, dehumidification kilns utilize a small heater and a dehumidifier unit, like one you would place in your basement. They can be placed indoors or outside, realizing that a warmer ambient external temperature will help speed the drying process. Translated, if placed outside they will perform better during the warmer months of the year.

A few years ago the the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Products Lab in Princeton, West Virginia designed, built and tested the DIY dehumidification kiln. Our USFS friends have also made the plans into a publication for all to use:

[USFS Dehumidification Kiln](#)



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 **new** website >>>

TreesVirginia



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



The Marketing Corner

Rubber Stamp Marketing

The other day while visiting a local sawmill and lumber retailer, I saw one of the most effective, but simple marketing techniques that I have seen in a very long time and it came from a rubber stamp and an ink pad! While in the last issue we talked about a more complex marketing approach, for this newsletter we are keeping it simple, cheap and yet effective with rubber stamping marketing!

Marketing your business can be viewed as looking for new customers and keeping the ones you already have, both of which are equally important! While some folks wishing to purchase wood might be very knowledgeable about wood identification, there are probably many more that have no idea of what species they might be looking at. Stamping the wood type on the end of the board makes shopping easier and it also creates a more educated consumer. Rubber stamping lumber for identification purposes takes seconds, but in doing so you are creating a more confident and appreciative customer that will share this positive experience with others.

This same business also marked their boards with their trademark and name. This helps to create name recognition and recall. Every time the purchaser uses that board or even just looks at it, they will have that name/image engraved in their memories, the positive benefits of the simplicity and ease of rubber stamp marketing!





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