

UI Extension Forestry Information Series

Wood Storage

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Once fuelwood is obtained in the forest and transported, the next step is to store the wood for later use. If your wood is not seasoned, it will require a year in storage under typical Idaho climatic conditions before burning. Seasoning will bring the wood to the proper moisture content. Proper moisture content is essential for an easy starting fire and minimum creosote problem in the chimney. Your wood will season better if the logs are cut to length (4 inches less than the width of your firebox) and split into quarters at least.

How do you know when your wood is adequately seasoned? Two methods are used:

- Watch for small end cracks or checks. When these appear, the wood is seasoned and is ready for the fire.
- Weigh a fixed amount of wood at monthly intervals until the weight loss is negligible. Seasoned wood is much lighter than “green” wood.

Locate wood storage at least 30 feet from your house and other outbuildings to minimize fire danger. Cover the stack to help keep the wood dry. Permanent structures can be built of the type in Figure 1 or, as an alternative, plastic polyethylene sheeting (.004 inch

thickness) can be used as a cover for the stack. If the wood is not seasoned, allow adequate air circulation around the sides. The stack should be located on well-drained land with the bottom pieces on wood slates or lathe.

Insect Problems. Green wood can harbor numerous insects that can damage your house or your ornamental trees. When in doubt about insects in your firewood, leave the wood in the forest.

Insect problems associated with dead wood are much less than green wood. The major insect that must be considered in dead wood is the carpenter ant. This ant is black, or black and red, large-sized (1/4 to 5/8 inch long), and is found throughout Idaho. The ant does not eat the wood but simply excavates nests, leaving a “sawdust” pile by the infested lumber or tree. This ant has the potential to do more structural damage to buildings in Idaho than any other insect.

This information first appeared as CIS 474 and was part of the *Wood as a Fuel Series*.

About the Author: *Dr. Don Hanley* is a former Extension Forester and Professor at the University of Idaho.

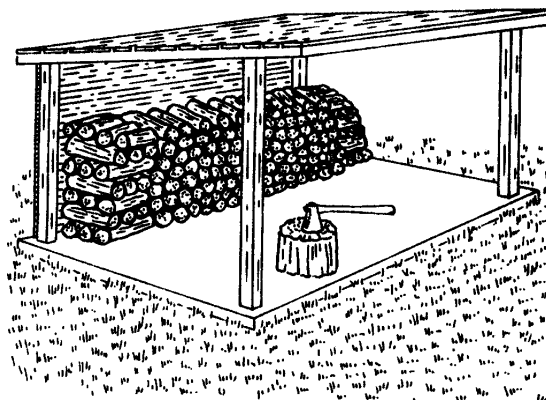


Figure 1. Protect dry, split wood from weather, especially snow and ice. A pole-constructed woodshed is easy and inexpensive to build. You can provide simple protection with planks, plywood, sheets of metal roofing, or plastic placed over stacked wood.