

Better firewood for your home

At this time of year we turn our focus to summer, but it's also when we should start getting ready for next winter

Firewood is best burned when it is seasoned. But what exactly does this mean?

Freshly cut wood (also known as green wood) can contain up to 100% moisture. This means the water in the wood weighs as much as the wood itself.

Burning unseasoned wood is bad for your health, the environment, and your wallet.

When you burn unseasoned wood most of its energy is used up trying to evaporate its water content and much less is used on producing warmth. However, burning seasoned wood ensures that the energy from your wood is used to effectively heat your home.

Green wood cools the fire which then creates excess smoke and can clog up your flue.

Seasoned wood = less smoke and better air quality

Green wood is generally cheaper when purchased in Spring or Summer ready for you to start the seasoning process in preparation for burning in Winter.

Stacking your wood

Once you have purchased your wood from a reputable supplier it is time to stack it to ensure it will be seasoned in time for use.

- Find a dry space where the wood can be stacked up and off the ground
- Leave small gaps between each piece of wood to encourage air flow
- Try to stack the wood against something for stability. A fence is perfect as it has gaps for extra air flow
- Cover your stacked pile to provide protection from from the elements

Now is also a good time to get your flue cleaned.



"Now is the best time to get your firewood. Get it stacked! Get it dried! Get better heat next Winter." Deborah Mills recommends.

Deborah Mills, Air Quality Specialist, Otago Regional Council

How long does it take to season wood?

Green wood takes anywhere between 6 months to over a year to season. Semi-seasoned can take 6 months. You can purchase wood that is seasoned or semi-seasoned but this can be more expensive than purchasing green wood and completing the seasoning process yourself.

Moisture meter

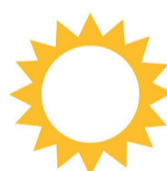
Moisture meters, as the name suggests, measures the moisture content in your wood. Simply poke the prongs into the end of your wood and wait for the reading. Optimal wood moisture is under 25%. This is classed as seasoned and ready for use.

Moisture meters can be purchased at most hardware stores such as Mitre 10 and Bunnings.

Some moisture meters allow you to select the type of wood you are using for the most accurate reading.



A moisture meter checking the wood dryness



Spring / Summer is the BEST time to get your wood for next Winter

How can we make sure wood is correctly seasoned?

If you are in the market for seasoned firewood or you have prepared for winter by purchasing your wood in Spring, you need to check your wood to ensure it is seasoned and ready for use. But how do you know if your wood is properly seasoned and ready to use?

- It is much lighter in weight than green wood as the water content is a lot less.
- It doesn't smell like wood. Wood smells most when it is moist and will lose its woody smell as it becomes well seasoned.
- The colour of the wood will be dull and grey.
- Use a moisture meter to check the moisture content in your wood. Optimal moisture content is less than 25%.
- The ends of the woods will have cracks as the drying process causes the wood to become brittle.
- There is no bark or the bark comes off easily. This is due to the lack of moisture in the wood.
- It sounds hollow when you tap 2 pieces of wood together. If you hear a dull 'thunk', the wood is too damp.

For more information about better burning and air quality visit our website www.orc.govt.nz/managing-our-environment/air