

Exploring Your Wood Use Options

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Do you have an old Big Leaf maple or walnut tree right where you don't want it? Is there a tree or trees in the way of planned improvement or taking up shade space where you want to plant some seedlings? Are you thinking you might need some milled lumber to build a shed, lean-to or other pro-

ject? Do you own trees, but can't justify a contractor to cut and haul such a small amount to a large mill? The wood you buy at the local lumber or big-box store started out as a tree or trees just like yours.

How about a unique computer table or bar top made from your own hardwood tree, a nice large wood sign for your gate post, or maybe having a burl cut for a coffee table? Each year, people stop by our CCFFA display booth at Tree School and other such events with questions regarding options for use of single logs or a small number of trees. While you can always cut it into fire wood, burn it yourself or sell it on the open market, you may want to explore your options. You

may be able to bypass the middle man, by having your logs milled and save some money.

We set out to see what some of those options might be and try to provide some insight into what a small woodland owner would need to know when pursuing having their mill-work done by small saw-milling and woodworking mills.

In general, if you are planning on having your own milling done, it would be in your best interest to contact the mills to determine who can best meet your milling needs and located where the costs of transport is a at minimum. Be prepared to discuss the following:

- The species, diameter and the length of the log portion of the trees.
- How long the trees have been

down. Try to keep the window from falling to milling at less than a year. They can cut older trees, but you may not be pleased with the end product; soft spots, cracks, etc.

- Also, this is important, have them visit or tell you over the phone, what lengths the tree or trees should be cut too so that you get the best use of the wood. Cutting the log into 12 foot lengths for 10 foot boards or beams is a waste; the same goes for cutting 12 foot logs for 12 foot boards and not allowing for waste trim; oops you're a little short.

- It is best to have a site visit before you fall the tree. This is especially true if you are looking at taking advantage of deformed wood or burls that you plan to use for very special projects.

- Most mills buy, for their retail use, by the truckload F.O.B. their mill. Custom cuts, like yours must be delivered to the mill site unless other special hauling arrangements are agreed too. Your delivered logs must be within the capabilities of the mill handling dimensions.

- Most mills will do custom cutting of any species of wood you can haul to their mills and most charge by the milled board foot or by the hour.

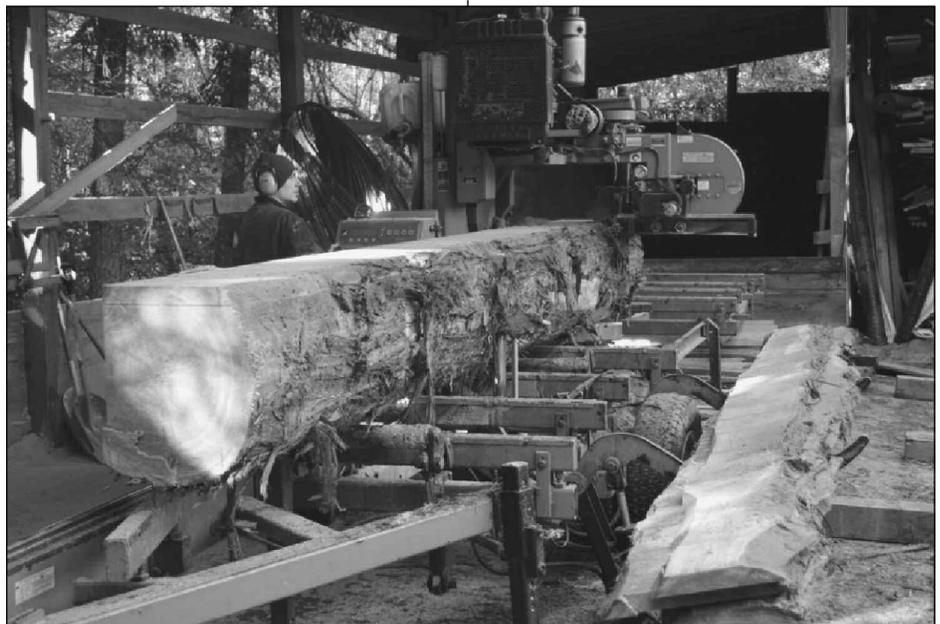
- Keep in mind, that saw mills and specialty wood mills may have the same types of equipment, but may not be set up to mill the end product you desire. Some mills are set up to provide rough cut, full dimension, lumber only. Others have planing mills or access to planing mills to provide finish dimension lumber for larger projects.

- Another issue is drying. Some mills may not have the equipment or capacity for drying the end products.

It just so happens that we have a CCFFA member, who is also on the board of directors, with a wood mill



Kaster's specialty sawmill.



Layout of specialty sawmill.

to offer you some options. Kevin Kaster, of Kaster Kustom Cutting, was kind enough to sit down for an interview. With over 20 years experience along with input of other mill owners, they will help you explore the ins and outs of using a custom wood mill for your needs. The following paragraphs we will help you discover some of the general things needed to know when dealing with such a mill.

Kaster Kustom Cutting has three types of mills, which one used depends on the product being milled. The portable mill for field use can handle 20 feet lengths and 30 inch diameters. Their main mill is a band saw which can mill logs up to 32 feet long and 30 inches in diameter with ease. He also has a Lucas chain saw mill, used to cut slabs used for natural edge projects.

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It can handle up to 72 in. diameter logs. Unique shaped log pieces, such as burls, can be down to 36 in. in length, but may require additional set up costs.

Kaster's operation has the capability of providing forced air dehumidification kilns.

Keep in mind, that with custom sawmills, you have the capability of milling 12 in. and wider boards; something not readily available through big-box stores or lumber yards.

Some of the custom wood mills have their own retail products and will buy or barter for wood species or specialties that they need. Kaster primarily uses export grade Douglas-fir or western redcedar but has recently expanded out to include Big Leaf Maple. If he has an order, from a longtime customer, that requires other species, he will contact other mills to find what he needs to fill the order. If unable to acquire product to meet his needs, they will go to the open market

including on-line sites.

Kaster's retail product lines run from cedar planks, used by restaurants for planked salmon, through tongue and grooved flooring and up to large exposed beams. Other mills, that we contacted, buy wood for such diverse retail items as sign boards for carving, small wood components for craft and wood-working users,

If you have one or two trees or saw logs that can be used to meet end product needs, you may want to maintain contact with the individual mills for future market source. Also, if you decide to market your logs on sites, like Craigslist, and some do, use all the precautions available to you for dealing with potential buyers on-line.

Initially, we didn't intend to cover portable sawmills, but found that we could not leave them out of the equation. For the most part, contracting for portable sawmill work, the general information mentioned at the start of the article would still apply. However, for portable mill use you can add the following:

- Where are the logs currently lying and what type of access is available.
- Do you have equipment available to move the logs and prepare them for the sawyer's access?

- Will the contractor be required to make cuts to achieve required lengths?

- Will you, or others, be available to assist or provide on-site directions? A little sweat equity will go a long way in reducing your costs.

- As for costs, most of the sawyers we talked with have a set fee for transport and setup. This fee usually includes a minimum number cutting hours; example being, \$350 for transport and setup that includes a three hour cutting time. Most charge by the hour but some will charge by the board foot for larger operations.

Briefly, what are some of the other options for disposing of your logs or trees?

Sell your small quantities of logs for chips or pulp wood. In the Clackamas County area, this can be accomplished by hauling them to a pulp & chip facility like Kap Stone Resources in Molalla. They are currently taking Doug fir, hemlock, spruce and other true firs as well as alder, maple, ash and cherry.

- Pulp wood must be 12 ft. minimum in length with a minimum of 3 in. diameter.
- Chip logs can be less than 12 ft. (chunks) in length and can be of firewood quality.
- Burnt logs are not acceptable.
- Prices are flexible depending on demand.

- You must provide transportation to facility.

For more information contact Jeff at 360-430-8080.

Of course, there is also the good old fire wood option.

While market prices fluctuate, they have been running in the area of \$200 per cord for mixed species and seasoned wood. This price is usually delivered. Fire wood from native hardwoods can usually bring higher prices. The most common types of wood are fir, alder, oak, maple and ash. Seasoned usually means air dried for one year.

If you are going to get into the firewood business, you will need to have some equipment: pickup or sturdy trailer; equipment to move wood to a cutting area; chain saws and related tools; and a means of splitting the wood. If you have the physical capabilities to manually split the wood and enjoy the exercise, properly weighted maul and wedges will get you started. If you don't feel up to manually splitting the wood look at possibly purchasing a portable splitter. For limited use, you can spend as little as \$1,200 for a good horizontal/vertical unit. But, if you have lots of wood or access to wood, you can spend in the range of \$3,000 for a unit with more tonnage capability.

Should you decide to start an actual business of supplying firewood from sources other than your own woodlands, you may want look at a total wood processing package like the one demonstrated this past summer at Barton Park.

You can market your firewood through on-line sites, such as Craigslist, or advertise in the local newspaper or community newsletters. Some woodland owners have been successful in selling wood by posting notices on public bulletin boards and stores, saw shops and

public sites where permitted. You can also join the Oregon Woodland Co-op and as a member and market all sorts of woodland products; on-line at oregonwoodlandcooperative.com.

You may be able to have customers come to your property and cut firewood or contract with a firewood supplier to cut wood on a per cord basis. A word of caution. Check with your insurance provider regarding having someone other than yourself cut or haul fire wood on your property.

You can use the OSU Extension Service Pamphlet listed below to determine the best and most efficient fire wood to process.

Processing Firewood—**Extension Circular 1628E** or contact your local OSU County Extension Service office.

We want to thank the following mill owners, which is a partial list of

small sawmills in the Clackamas County area, for their assistance in bringing this article to you;

Kaster Kustom Cutting, Inc.
Kevin Kaster
503-829-4167

Osprey Custom Sawing
Bruce Whiting
503-630-2211

Yoder Mill, Inc.
Dave Yoder
503-651-2525

Saga Enterprises
Ray Sparre
dba: Saga Portable Saw-milling
Saga Signs & Wonders
503-829-2367

If you wish to expand your options area, for mill locations go online to the *Oregon Forest Industry Directory* by Scott Leavengood from the Oregon State University Forestry Department. ■