

Timbers for Boat Building - A Guide

This guide is intended to give a brief outline of the suitability of various timbers in common use today for the purpose of boat building and fitting out. We are pleased to offer more technically detailed information on request. Many other materials can be used in boat building, and our sales office will be pleased to quote for your requirements. We source prime grade timbers worldwide, and offer a complete machining and moulding service.

Ash

A strong and resilient timber. Ash is reasonably light, its suitability to bending leads to some use in boat building. Being perishable, it needs treatment in a marine environment. Modern use tends to be more for interior fitting out, often being used for light capping pieces in contrast to teak panels, and externally for gunwales and tillers.

Cost:	Medium
Moisture Movement:	Medium
Durability:	Perishable
Size:	Small - Medium

Iroko

Extensively used as an excellent cheap alternative to Teak, Iroko is yellow when freshly cut, but soon darkens to a teak like colour. Its grain is irregular and interlocked which tends to twist on re-conversion. Iroko can be obtained in large sections. It is ideally suited to applications such as rubbing strips where it is fastened down, eliminating any twist.

Cost:	Low - Medium
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Very Durable
Size:	Large

Khaya (West African Mahogany)

With good working properties, this timber is occasionally used in place of higher quality American Mahogany. It is available in constructional veneer for cold moulding. It is slightly lighter than Brazilian Mahogany in weight, but normally has a coarser texture.

Cost:	Low - Medium
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Moderately Durable
Size:	Medium

Mahogany

With a fine grain, good density and a consistent pale red colour, Mahogany is an excellent boat building timber which is easy to work and finishes well. Having good stability, it is ideal for constructional and fitting out work in a marine environment.

Cost:	Medium
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Durable
Size:	Medium

Oak

Oak is a heavy and durable timber which was very popular for constructional use in boats. It shows dark staining when in contact with iron, and can corrode some metals. It is still used for heavy constructional purposes. It can be obtained in large sections, but only in green form.

Cost:	Medium
Moisture Movement:	Medium
Durability:	Durable
Size:	Small - Large

Pitch Pine

This Central American Softwood is popular because of its strength and durability compared to most other pines. It is available up to 4" in 'clear' quality, but availability does vary from time to time. Larger sizes in 'commercial' grade are used for large constructional purposes.

Cost:	Low - Medium
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Very Durable
Size:	Large

Teak

Teak is generally straight grained of medium texture and appears golden brown when first cut darkening with exposure to light & age. Teak has been the preferred timber for Decks, Rubbing Strakes, Gunwales, Cabins and Internal Joinery for nearly 150 years. It has an oily content which makes this timber very durable and ideal for exterior work including decks due to its resistance to wear and rot. We avoid buying fast grown material from some plantations where the quality is inconsistent, and unsuitable for high quality work such as boat decking.

Cost:	High
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Very Durable
Size:	Medium

Douglas Fir

This traditional boat building softwood is very strong for its weight and is therefore used for both heavy constructional purposes as well as being suitable for masts and spars. It is available in long clear lengths and finishes well.

Cost:	Low - Medium
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Moderately Durable
Size:	Large

Cedar

Western Red Cedar is an excellent light weight softwood used for construction work. It is also available in constructional veneer, ideal for cold moulding. Having straight grain it is very easy to work due to its light weight and is used for racing boat construction and interior fitting out.

Cost:	Low - Medium
Moisture movement:	Small
Durability:	Very Durable
Size:	Small - Medium

Southern Yellow Pine

With good wide and defect free boards available, Southern Yellow Pine is often used for interior and exterior work on boats. It is easy to work and finishes well. It should be well treated in an exterior situation.

Cost:	Low
Moisture Movement:	Medium
Durability:	Non Durable
Size:	Small - Medium

Sitka Spruce

Although technically non durable, Sitka Spruce is popular because of its very high strength to weight ratio and close straight grain. It has excellent working qualities. Although now becoming difficult to obtain in high quality, when available it is ideal for masts and spars.

Cost:	Medium
Moisture Movement:	Small
Durability:	Non Durable
Size:	Small - Medium

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ROBBINS TIMBER ■ BROOKGATE ■ ASHTON VALE TRADING ESTATE ■ BRISTOL ■ BS3 2UN ■ UK
Tel: +44 (0)117 963 3136 ■ Fax: +44 (0)117 963 7927 ■ E-mail: timber@robbins.co.uk ■ www.robbins.co.uk

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