



Why choosing local lumber matters

IS ALL LUMBER created equal? Does it really matter what your customers choose and what they order for their projects? From sale pricing, to choosing a product they've used before and liked, what drives your customers to choose the wood they do?

Plot twist: it does matter. Quite a bit, actually. Lumber may look the same and sometimes even cost around the same, but all lumber is not equal. One of the primary differences: the geographical origin location of each stick of wood sold.

Geographically relevant. What does that mean? It means purchasing something (a product, service, etc.) that's local or regional to you, thereby benefitting your area economically. When it comes to lumber, you want to sell (and buy!) geographically relevant lumber for multiple reasons.

Rod Wiles, vice president of human resources at Hammond Lumber in Belgrade, Me., agrees: "Since 1953, Hammond Lumber has had a proud history of staying close to its sources and close to the people and businesses it supports by sourcing quality pine and hemlock locally."

Let's compare and contrast different species and what they have to offer. For the sake of argument, we'll talk about exterior trim applications and put eastern white pine up against a radiata pine imported into the United States from another country and compare the two with multiple data points:

- **The growth cycle.** Eastern white pine becomes strong and beautiful from the sun and the rain—that's it. A long, slow, even growth cycle results in naturally durable lumber and beautiful, rich character in the wood grain. Contrasted with the fast, uneven growth seen in radiata pine, which results in inherent poor decay resistance and a lack of wood grain character.

- **Carbon footprint.** Purchasing locally and regionally grown lumber means minimal logistics, like transportation. Less transportation = fewer ships and trucks emitting nasty CO₂ into the environment, just to get your

wood to you from the other side of the world (or opposite end of the country). Pine that's not local can be geographically invasive and brings with it a Bigfoot-sized carbon footprint (can you imagine the CO₂ released on a trip over from New Zealand or Chile?). Also of note: most modern mills use every single piece of tree, whether it's for lumber or fuel. Zero carbon footprint.

- **Durability.** Eastern white pine brings to the table centuries of endurance, a superb level of natural decay resistance, and a strong, tight grain that results in a strong piece of lumber. Radiata, on the other hand, is historically irrelevant, offers little resistance to fungi and pests, and has a wide, irregular grain.

- **What is the wood treated with?** For eastern white pine, the answer is nothing. Which means it's safe for all environments with no additives and a natural resilience. Radiata must be immersed in chemicals to give it some decay protection. If it's not? Premature product failure.

Why purchase something from a thousand miles away, when the local option is so much better for all these valid reasons?

So which lumber would you rather sell your customers: something that's durable, beautiful, and sustainable? Wood that supports local economies (especially now!)? Wood that can be easily and beautifully customized by sanding, planing, turning, mortising, finishing, or shaping? Wood that is grown within your region, manufactured, and milled? Wood that brings with it over 300 years of sustainable versatility? Is there even another relevant option?

When you as a dealer, and your customers, choose to keep your lumber choices geographically relevant, the impact is instant: you're not only protecting the earth from unnecessary carbon footprints, you're buying local and supporting local. What's more environmentally friendly than that?

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