

Tasmanian Timber

Sassafras

Atherosperma moschatum

Other common names: Tasmanian Sassafras, Southern Sassafras

The Timber

Of all Tasmanian timbers, Sassafras has the most variable and dynamic colouring. It is a beautiful and pale creamy grey to white normally but can be streaked with rich browns and black heart. It is available in two major groupings: Golden Sassafras and Blackheart Sassafras.

Finishing to a grey and golden tone, Golden Sassafras is particularly attractive as a veneer or as a solid timber with knots providing figure. If the tree is infected with a staining fungus it produces Blackheart Sassafras. Blackheart is a timber with distinctive dark brown, black, and even green streaks running through the wood. Blackheart is highly prized for decorative work and bowl turning as no two pieces are ever the same.

Sassafras is versatile. While the wood is light and strong, it is rather soft and easily worked. Renowned in furniture use as a solid, a veneer or a laminated board, Sassafras is used for panelling, mouldings, joinery, veneers, cabinet-making and turnery.

The Resource

Sassafras grows as an understorey species in lower altitude wet forests throughout Tasmania. It is not related to the timbers known as Sassafras that grow on

mainland Australia. It is an aromatic evergreen tree with some quite distinctive qualities; the bark, sap, and associated oils are highly aromatic and smell like cinnamon, while its leaves have a strong sarsaparilla scent. The leaves are dark green, turning yellow as the tree ages. The best trees are found in gullies where Sassafras may reach 45 m in height and almost 1 m in diameter.

Sassafras is a component of wet eucalypt forest and young rain forest where it may live for up to 150–200 years. It is a heavy seed producer although germination can be erratic. Seedlings are subject to heavy browsing by native animals and many young trees become established where they are inaccessible, on mounds or on man fern trunks.

Much Sassafras establishes as coppice or multi-stemmed trunks.

Sassafras timber will always be accessible to the furniture industry in company with other forest produce. While wet mixed and eucalypt forests are sustainably harvested for eucalypt veneer and sawlogs, Sassafras will be available as a by-product.



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Sassafras

Tasmanian Sassafras properties:	
Colour	The sapwood of Sassafras is white or greyish, the heartwood can be similarly pale or stained black (“blackheart”).
Grain	Grain is fairly straight, even and smooth.
Texture	Fine and uniform.
Durability	Sassafras is not included in AS 5604 – 2005 Timber – Natural durability ratings. It has good durability for decorative, architectural and structural applications internally but is not recommended for external use. The in-ground durability of heartwood is low.
Lycetid susceptibility	Sapwood is not susceptible.
Sizes	Sassafras is usually available in the seasoned condition. Undressed squares are available up to 75 mm. Most production is of lengths less than 1.8 m.
Density	Approximately 590 kg/m ³ at 12% moisture content.
Shrinkage (green to 12% MC)	Approximately 2.2% radial, 5.8% tangential.
Movement	Between 25% and 5% MC, radial movement is approximately 0.18% per 1% MC change; tangential movement about 0.34% per 1% MC change.
Strength groups	Seasoned SD5, unseasoned S5.
Joint group	Seasoned JD4, unseasoned J3.
Structural grades	Not used structurally.
Toughness (Izod)	Low - up to 15 Nm
Hardness (Janka)	2.1 kN unseasoned, 3.4 kN seasoned,

Workability	
General	Tasmanian Sassafras works easily and cleanly, and is well suited for turning. It is an excellent bending timber, and has a low tendency to split.
Blunting	Moderate.
Sawing	Cuts cleanly and accurately with standard blades. Rip-sawing requires high feeding forces and low feed rates.
Planing	Moderate feeding forces required.
Moulding	Produces good mouldings.
Boring	Easy to drill. Holes are clean and to size.
Rebating + mortising	Generally produces good results.
Turning	Turns very well.
Nailing	All nail holes must be pre-drilled.
Gluing	Glues satisfactorily with most common adhesives.
Bending	An excellent bending timber. 25 mm material bends well to a radius of 75 mm.
Finishing	Readily worked to a smooth, lustrous surface. Most finishes adhere very well. Dark stains tend to look “blotchy”.



Tasmanian timber is sustainably grown, harvested and processed to meet the highest standards in quality and environmental practice.

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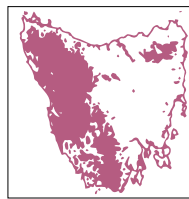
Tasmanian Timber

Sassafras

Atherosperma moschatum

Forest Type

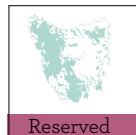
Distribution of forest type that contain these species:



Forest Type Location



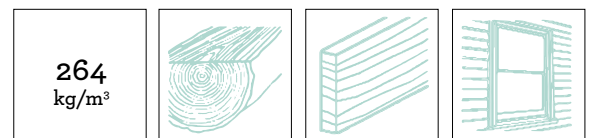
Rain



Certification



Carbon Storage²

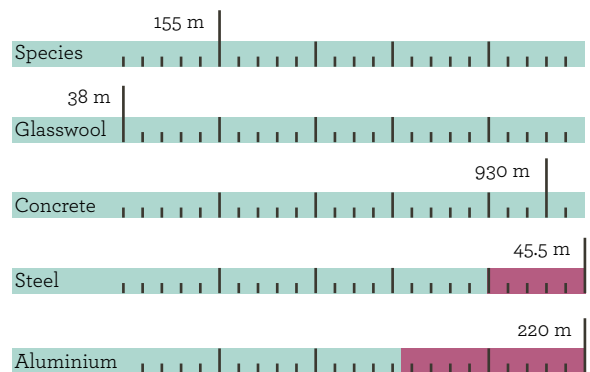


Availability



Thermal Resistance³

Thickness required to achieve a value of R1



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Appearance

In ideal conditions, Sassafras can grow up to 45 m tall, obtain a diameter of 1 m, and reach ages of 150–200 years. As an understorey species, it reaches heights of 25m and 75 cm in diameter. The tree has a conical crown and is often partially covered in lichen.

Flowers: flowers are unisexual, with both sexes found on the same tree. Each flower is surrounded by a pair of bracts that appear in winter. The female flower is contained within a cup-shaped receptacle.

Leaves: the leaves of the Sassafras tree are lance-shaped with a saw tooth edge. They are about 4 cm long and 2 cm wide and have a strong Sarsaparilla scent. Juvenile leaves are dark green with a white underside, that turn yellow as they age.

Bark: the bark is light grey to dark brown with numerous pores. It contains tannin, resin and essential oils, which smell strongly of cinnamon.

Forest

Sassafras can be found in Tasmania's native forests. It generally grows in well-drained rainforests in cool damp conditions, where it is one of the dominant species. Sassafras prefers gullies and along creek lines and grows from sea level to around 800 m.

Growing Constraints: Sassafras can grow well on sites of moderate fertility and it seeds heavily. However, seedlings are favoured by native animals and its successful growth can be restricted by browsing.

Distribution: in Tasmania, Sassafras is found in most areas of the state, except for drier areas of the east coast. It is common on both the eastern and western mountains ranges. Approximately 82% of Tasmania's forests containing Sassafras are held in reserves.

Environmental

The aim of environmentally sustainable and responsible building practice is to consume minimal resources during construction, operation and eventual demolition.

Sustainable Management¹: the National Forest Policy Statement identifies three principles for sustainable forest management: preserve biological diversity, maintain ecological processes within forests, and community benefit. Species sourced and processed in Tasmania from certified native forest and plantations are considered to be sustainably managed.

Certification: certified forests are managed in line with internationally recognised performance-based standards and are subject to third party audit. Most forests in Tasmania are certified to the Australian Forest Certification Scheme (AFCS). This requires compliance with AS 4708 (for forestry growers) and AS 4707 for Chain of Custody (forest to consumers). AFCS is internationally recognised by the Program of the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes (PEFC) and certifiers are independently accredited by JAS-ANZ.

Chain of Custody: ensures that timber supplied is from a certified forest source. It requires controlled labelling and an auditable trail from the forest along the supply chain involving forest managers, processors, manufacturers, and stockists.

Carbon Storage²: the growth of trees absorbs carbon, other emissions and particles from the atmosphere; converting them into wood and other biomass. Some carbon is released by harvest and processing, but the carbon stored within the recovered wood is contained for the life of the material.

R Values³: a material's resistance to the flow of heat is calculated as its R Value. The R Value of the building envelope is the sum of individual building components. The insulation (R Value) properties of building materials are important considerations in the design of energy efficient structures.

Availability: Sassafras' availability is limited, and is constrained by location and style of harvesting operations.



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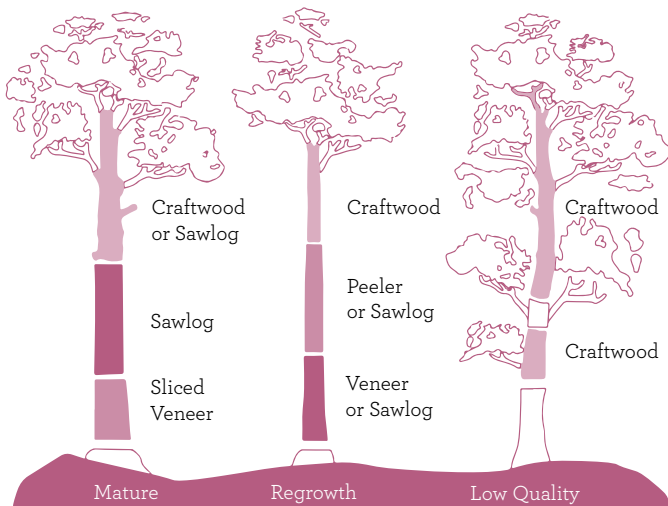
Tasmanian Timber

Sassafras

Environmental Summary	
Resource Available from sustainably managed sources ¹	✓
Reserves A percentage of this species is reserved	✓
Certification This species is available with forest certification	✓
Chain of Custody Product with Chain of Custody is available	✓
Appearance Product for appearance use is available	✓
Structural Product for structural use is available	✗

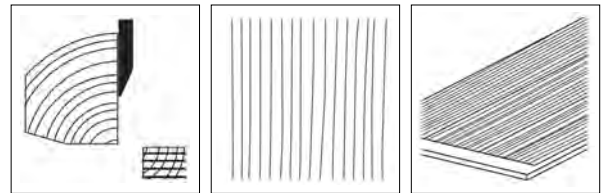
Tree Product

Mature Eucalypt Profile Shown

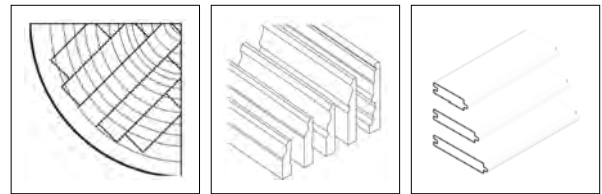


Products Appearance

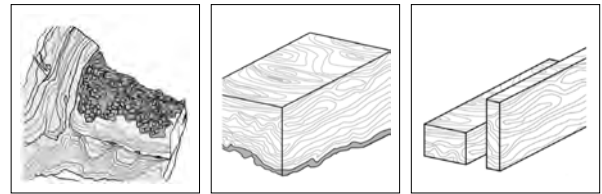
Quarter Sawn Veneer



Sawn Solid



Craft Wood



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Characteristics



Colour:

Heartwood in various shades of brown; beautiful and pale creamy grey to white sapwood, but can be streaked with rich browns and black heart. It is available in two major groupings: Golden Sassafras and Blackheart Sassafras. Finishing to a grey and golden tone, Golden Sassafras is particularly attractive as a veneer or as a solid timber with knots providing figure. Blackheart prized for decorative work is a timber with distinctive dark brown, black and even green streaks running through the wood.



Grain:

Straight, with fine and even texture.



Features:

1 & 2 Stain: a coloration in the wood caused by micro-organisms, decay or bacterial infection.

Credits:

Maps: Tasmanian Government Department of Primary Industries and Water; **Tree Product Illustration:** Forestry Tasmania; **Forest Type Illustration:** Fred Duncan, Forestry Tasmania; **Forest Image:** Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board; **Species Illustration:** Vicky Dewsbury; **Species Application Image:** Simon Ancher

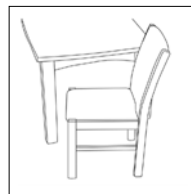
1. National Forest Policy Statement, daffa.gov.au

2. 2004: Ximenes, F.A. and Davies, I. "Timber CAM – A carbon accounting model for wood and wood products in Australia". dpi.nsw.gov.au/forests/info/timbercam

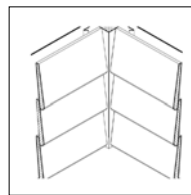
3. R Value Comparison Calculations -AS2878:2000, and ASHRAE, 2005 Physical Properties of Materials.

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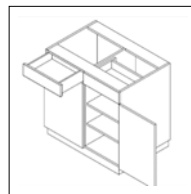
Applications



Furniture



Lining & Cladding



Joinery



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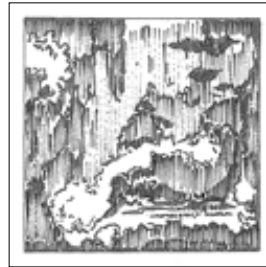
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Sassafras

Tree

Can grow to 45 m tall
Average height is 25 m
75 cm – 1 m diameter



Bark

Light grey to dark brown
Cinnamon scent



Leaves

Lance-shaped
Saw tooth edge
Sarsaparilla scent



Flowers

Cup receptacle
Surrounded by bracts in winter



Funding assistance was provided through the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement Industry Development Program, a joint initiative of the Australian and Tasmanian governments and administered by the Australian government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

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