

## Buying woodfuel and directory of woodfuel suppliers

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The Oxfordshire Community Woodfuel Programme is a new initiative run by the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment and several partner organisations. It aims to help local communities to:

- Connect with their local environment and local energy supply, and understand the productive nature of woodlands
- Increase their supply and demand for woodfuel
- In doing so, reduce their carbon footprints, improve their biodiversity, and reduce their 'fuel miles'

I am the programme manager and hope to send you regular briefings. This first note is about buying woodfuel, for anyone with a wood burning stove or fireplace. Please help your wallet, your flue, and your local woodfuel merchants by being an informed buyer.

The environmental advantages of using woodfuel decrease the further the wood has to travel. So aim to **get your wood locally**: from your community woodland or local woodland owners: look in shop windows or notice boards, or try [www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/](http://www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/), [www.woodfueldirectory.org](http://www.woodfueldirectory.org) and [www.coppice-products.co.uk](http://www.coppice-products.co.uk). Unless stated otherwise, wood from garage forecourts or supermarkets is unlikely to be local. Kiln dried wood has been – as the name implies – heated up to drive off water. This heating process uses energy, and also reduces the environmental advantage of burning wood.

Logs are generally sold by the load, but there is no specification of what a 'load' is. **Rules of thumb for purchasing logs** include:

- Buy logs that have been dried for at least one year under cover, otherwise you may well get logs with a high moisture content, and spend much of the wood energy just turning this into steam. The ends of dry wood often look greying and old, with radial lines of splitting. Alternatively buy freshly cut logs, which will be cheaper, and dry them yourselves for a year under cover.
- When completely dry, all wood produces roughly the same amount of energy per weight. However hardwood (e.g. ash, hazel, fruit tree) logs weigh more than softwood (pine) logs, and so produce more energy per log. This means that a tonne of hardwood logs will take up less space than a tonne of softwood logs, and fewer 'top ups' of hardwood logs will be needed to keep a log stove running for a given time. So be clear about whether you are getting hardwood or softwood.
- Make sure that the logs are cut short enough to fit into your stove.
- Any logs that have a diameter of more than 10cm (8 inches) should be split.
- Look for certificates like HETAS and Woodsure, which guarantee wood quality.

The Oxfordshire Community Woodfuel Programme is working on developing a specification for firewood, including what a 'load' means, and what moisture content the wood should have. Watch this space!

You could consider **buying woodfuel as a group**. It is easier and cheaper for a supplier to serve one large customer than many small customers, so community woodfuel buying

scheme may get a better price because of these economies of scale. The Oxfordshire Rural Community Council runs a community oil buying scheme, and may be able to provide advice on setting up a similar scheme for logs: contact them at [oil@oxonrcc.org.uk](mailto:oil@oxonrcc.org.uk).

Finally, we **encourage woodfuel suppliers to register with websites** so that people can more easily find their local suppliers. The main free sites are [www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/](http://www.sylva.org.uk/myforest/), [www.woodfueldirectory.org](http://www.woodfueldirectory.org) and [www.coppice-products.co.uk](http://www.coppice-products.co.uk).

And please contact me with any ideas and questions about woodfuel – 01865 243488, [riki@phoncoop.coop](mailto:riki@phoncoop.coop).