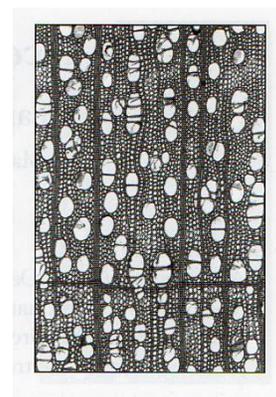


Wood of The Month



End Grain View

Acer negundo – Boxelder

For the first “Wood of the Month” subject I thought I should start at the beginning of the alphabet. Well, “B” is pretty close to the beginning, but the ‘real’ name of box elder; “*Acer negundo*”, comes up pretty nearly to the top of the list.

Box elder, *Acer negundo*, is a member of the maple family, hence the name *Acer* which is the scientific (Latin) word for maple. Other names for box elder include; ash-leaved maple, Manitoba maple, ash maple, boxelder maple, California boxelder, soft maple, stinking ash, sugar ash, western boxelder, and several others.

Boxelder grows in the lower elevations of North America as far south as Guatemala and north into Canada, except for the Pacific Coast states and south central Canada. Some sources state that it grows in scattered areas of California, however. The tree is fast growing but is short lived, living only 70 – 80 years. It is a medium sized tree from 40 to 70 feet tall with a broad uneven crown. The leaves are distinguished from other maples by its compound leaves, like ash, with three and rarely five leaflets. It occurs in bottomlands, margins of swamps, moist ground along streams, bottoms of ravines, bases of bluffs, and edges of woods. Boxelder is the only member of the maple family that is wind pollinated and is one cause of hay fever in the spring. It is particularly susceptible to wind and storm damage and easily sheds limbs. It is also prone to heart rot and insect damage, the boxelder bug for one, which can be a pest around the home.

The wood is yellowish brown, while the sapwood is greenish yellow to creamy white. Red streaks that can be present are caused by a fungus (*Fusarium negundi*). This phenomena is sought after by woodworkers and wood turners, but the absence can make boxelder just good firewood. The red streaks can become lighter and brownish or gray as the wood ages. The wood is weak but is used for; pulp, crates, woodenware, turned objects, boxes, and cheap furniture. It works and turns well and takes a nice finish. Boxelder is not cut for commercial lumber, but can be mixed in with other soft maple. Specialty lumber and wood suppliers do sell it. A common source of boxelder is at the removal of the trees, be it for storm or wind damage, aged trees, for safety purposes or construction clearing and the like. Boxelder is suspected to cause allergic bronchial asthma and rhinitis.

You can read more on boxelder at; <http://www.wood-database.com/lumber-identification/hardwoods/box-elder/> or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acer_negundo