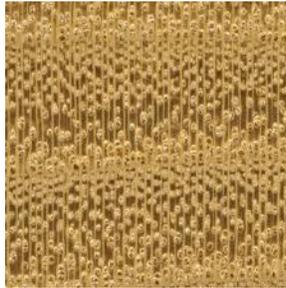


Wood of The Month



Mulberry – Morus spp.

Here we go around the mulberry bush. Although we do not have any silkworms in this country, we do have the mulberry leaves that is the silkworms' primary food source. Actually, it is the white mulberry (*Morus alba*) that is their favorite and not the red mulberry (*Morus rubra*) that is predominate here in Missouri. The red mulberry was cultivated in Europe in the 1800's for silkworm food, but it was discovered they preferred the smoother leaves of the white mulberry. Red mulberry is native to all of Missouri which is included in their growing range extending from northeastern Massachusetts to southeastern South Dakota, through all the eastern states, including all of Florida, westward to southwestern Oklahoma and central Texas. The white mulberry was imported and planted as an ornamental. It has escaped cultivation and is actually considered invasive. Mulberry is easily dispersed by the birds and wildlife that relish their fruit. The fruit is known to be eaten by at least 21 species of birds, including wild turkey and ruffed grouse; squirrels, mice, and raccoons. The sweet juicy fruit which is much like blackberries, and is used in jams, jellies, wines, pies and cobblers or just plain. The berries are red, green, or yellow when green and dark blue turning deep purple when ripe. The down side to the berries is that they can stain badly as I learned, as a youth growing up on the farm; you do not park your car under a mulberry tree.

The sapwood of red mulberry is yellowish or creamy colored. The heartwood is orange-yellow to golden brown, turning russet-brown after exposure to air and sunlight. The wood is hard, usually straight-grained, has no outstanding figure, and is very durable. Little commercial use is made of this wood since merchantable-sized logs are scarce. It works well and is fairly stable after drying, but it has a fairly coarse texture. Both visually and anatomically, the wood itself is very similar to osage orange, though mulberry tends to be significantly lighter. black locust also bears a close resemblance to mulberry, and it's weight is only slightly heavier than mulberry. While difficult to obtain, mulberry is an attractive wood that can be made into many craft items. It takes a high polish and makes attractive turnings or other items. Many of the traditional uses for mulberry include; fence posts, furniture, interior finish, caskets, cooperage, boat building, turnings and novelties.

If you are looking for a different wood to try, take a round from the mulberry bush and see what "pops" out.

You can read more about Mulberry at: [Mulberry on Wikipedia](#) and on [The Wood Database](#) .

Written by – Mel Bryan