

## Wood of The Month



### **Butternut** – *Juglans cinerea*

First cousin to black walnut, butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) is also called white walnut, American white walnut, and oil nut. It is generally regarded more valuable for its edible fruit (nuts) than for its use as lumber. Common uses for the lumber are; veneer, furniture, interior trim, boxes, crates, turnings and is a favorite carving wood. The heartwood is light to medium tan, sometimes with a reddish tint. Growth rings are darker and form fairly distinct grain patterns. The sapwood is a pale yellowish white. Like black walnut, its color varies considerably between trees. The wood is semi-ring porous.

Butternut is lightweight, machines well and sands well, although it is noticeably softer than black walnut. When working butternut, sharp tools and fine-grit sandpaper is recommended because of its tendency to leave fuzzy surfaces after planing or sanding. When turning butternut, because of its coarse grain and softness, sharp tools are required. And for best results when turning butternut a lathe speed of 800 – 1000 is recommended.

The availability of butternut is somewhat limited because the desirability of the nuts is higher than the lumber, therefore it is not harvested for lumber as readily. Also, the butternut trees are becoming endangered and are being protected in both the US and Canada due to a fungus known as Butternut canker and is causing the rapid decline of butternut.

The Native Americans used bark tea for rheumatism, headaches, and toothaches, applied to wounds to stop bleeding and to promote healing. Butternut bark and nut rinds were once often used to dye cloth to colors between light yellow and dark brown. To produce the darker colors, the bark is boiled to concentrate the color.

You can read more about Butternut at; [Juglans cinerea on Wikipedia](#) and on [The Wood Database](#).

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