

Ginkgo – *Ginkgo biloba*

If you ever have an opportunity to turn or work Ginkgo wood, you might enjoy some of the interesting facts about this tree. It has been called “a living fossil”, because it has been found in fossils that are over 200 million years old. Therefore, it may very well be one of the oldest living plants in the world. It inhabited the whole world and during the changes of the times it became restricted to China. Then in the 1700’s it was introduced to England then subsequently to the U.S. It is now found all over the world again. The tree is very hardy and can grow in harsh conditions and is therefore used widely as a street tree. As an example of ginkgo’s resilience and tolerance of harsh conditions, after the U.S. bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, although almost all other plants (and animals) in the area were killed, the ginkgos, though charred, survived and were soon healthy again.

Ginkgo has a unique and distinctive leaf in the shape of a fan and also goes by the name of maidenhair tree. The tree is dioecious, meaning its sexes/genders are separate trees. The female tree’s fruit/nut produce a foul smell when they ripen and fall to the ground.

The wood of ginkgo is an excellent wood to work with hand or power tools and turns very well. Even though it is a deciduous tree, the wood resembles conifer woods. Some have compared it to sugar pine. It is very fine grained, soft and easy to cut and holds details well. It would be a good carving wood. The color of the wood varies from pale cream to a medium golden tan. My experience with turning it was pleasant. Ginkgo wood can be used in many places where white pine is used. A reference to its use in China was for abacus beads, chessmen and as the base for oriental lacquerware. It is not marketed to any extent but, because it is used so extensively as an ornamental it should be fairly easy to acquire in small quantities.

Other uses for the tree are in the medical area, however, it should be researched well because I found references stating that it can cause medical problems.

You can read more about *Ginkgo biloba* at; [Wood Magazine](#) and on [Wikipedia](#).

