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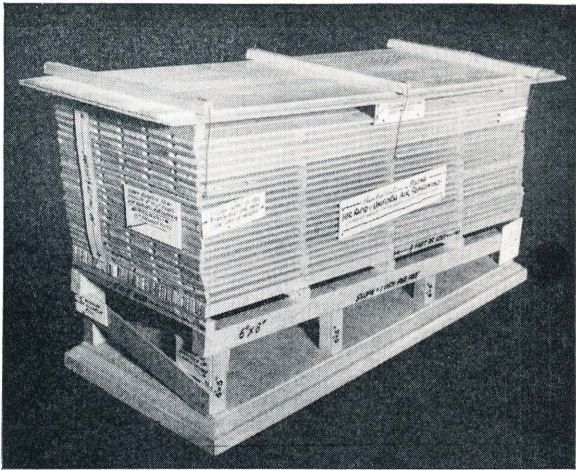
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Seasoning Home-grown Lumber
Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service
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Lester E. Bell, Forestry
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Seasoning Home-grown Lumber



This scale model illustrates a well constructed lumber pile, with a securely fastened roof to shed water.

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**MICHIGAN STATE COLLEGE
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Pile Your Lumber Correctly —

Moisture Content

When lumber is first sawed from a green log, one-third to one-half of its weight is moisture. It should be dried to 14-18 percent moisture content before being used. This can be done by air seasoning for from four months to one year. June, July and August are best for rapid drying. Thin lumber seasons more rapidly than thick lumber.

Drying

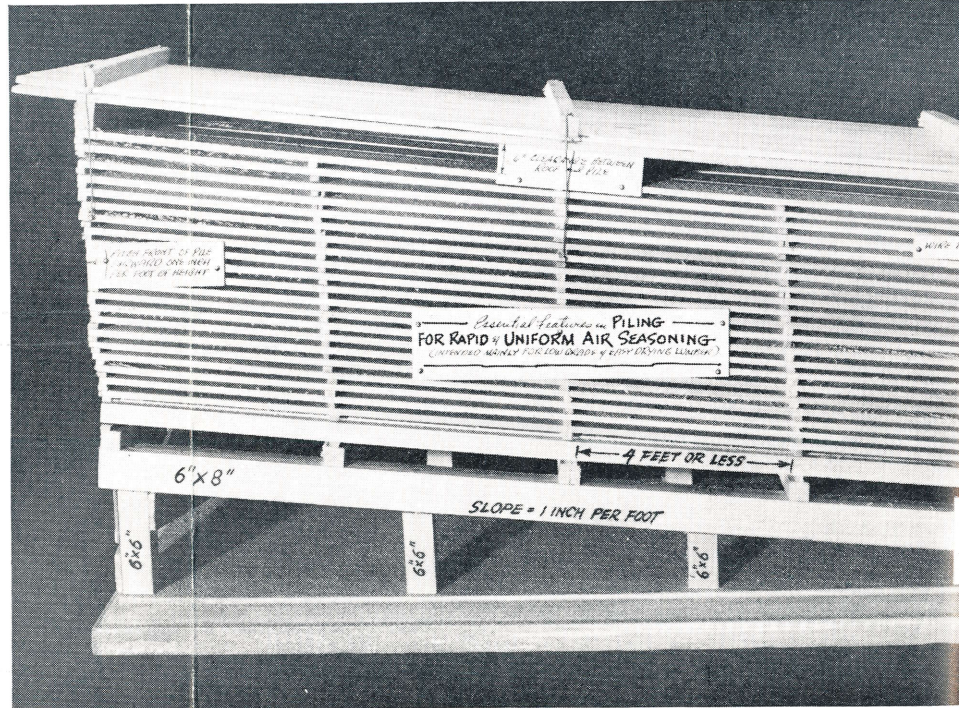
As the moisture is removed lumber has a tendency to warp, twist, cup and bow. Therefore, it must be properly piled to hold it straight while it dries.

When to Pile

Pile lumber immediately after it is sawed. Do not delay. Pine lumber will stain if not properly dried. All lumber will deteriorate rapidly if not well piled.

Where to Pile

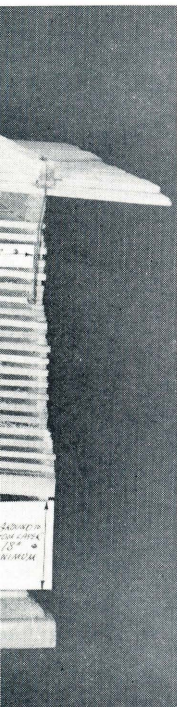
Select an open, well drained site for the pile. You must have good air circulation to dry lumber. Weeds and grass cut down air circulation and represent a fire hazard.



Essential Features in Lumber Piling

1. Select an open, well drained site for pile.
2. Build a solid foundation, with a slope from front to back of 1 inch per linear foot.
3. Make the height from ground to bottom layer at least 18 inches.
4. Remove weeds and trash from around pile.
5. Place heavy-dimension lumber near the bottom of pile so the weight above will prevent warping.
6. All 2 x 4's should be set on edge for drying.
7. Each layer should contain lumber of the same thickness.
8. Dry stickers should be placed between each layer of lumber. Stickers should be not more than 4 feet apart and directly above each other.
9. Front end of pile should be lapped forward 1 inch for each foot of length.
10. Use double course of bottom layer. These should be lapped to prevent water.

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Pile

Place 2 x 4's on edge in bottom layers of pile. Other heavy dimension stock should be near bottom also. Long boards should be used on outside, with shorter ones on the inside. No loose ends should be allowed to overhang without support. Wide piles should have an open flue in center. Space boards at least 1 inch apart to allow air movement through the pile. Only lumber of the same thickness should be piled in each layer.

Stickers

Stickers used to separate layers of lumber should be 1 inch thick, 1½ to 2 inches wide, and as long as the pile is wide. They should be made of dry material to lessen likelihood of staining the lumber. Wider stickers may be used at the front end of pile and should project ½ inch from the ends of the boards to decrease end-checking.

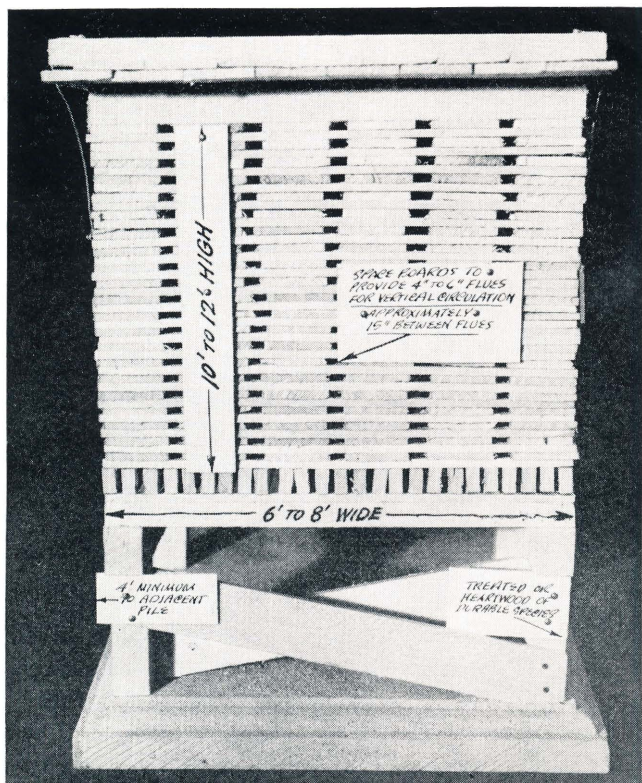
Stickers should be placed exactly one above the other.

Slope

The pile foundation should be sloped 1 inch per linear foot from front to back so as to allow rain or snow that blows into the pile to run off before soaking into the boards.

Pitch

The front end of the pile should pitch forward 1 inch for each vertical foot to prevent rain and snow from entering between the boards.



End view of scale model of a pile, showing flues for vertical circulation.

End Coating

High quality lumber in the heavier dimensions should be end-coated with a heavy paste of white lead and linseed oil, melted paraffin or asphalt roofing paint to reduce end-checking.

Roof

Low-grade boards should be used to construct a roof over the pile. Tarred building paper may also be used. The roof should project over the ends and sides of the pile to protect the lumber from the elements. It should be wired onto the pile to prevent the winds blowing it off.

NAILING HOME GROWN LUMBER

Certain species of our native hardwoods are difficult to nail. The following suggestions will aid the carpenter:

Woods difficult to nail

White ash, beech, yellow birch, rock elm, hickory, hard maple, and white oak.

Woods of medium hardness

American elm, red elm, hackberry, soft maple, red oak, and black oak.

Woods easy to nail

Aspen (popple), basswood, cedar, cottonwood, pine, tulip poplar and spruce.

To nail hard woods

Use a heavy hammer or a shingling hatchet.

Coat nails with grease, paraffin, beeswax or soap.

Use blunt nails. Points can be removed from nails by placing a handful of them against an emery wheel.

Pre-drill holes with a drill slightly smaller than the nail to be used.

Green or partially dried wood nails easier than dry wood—but it will not hold nails as well.

HOW TO WASTE VALUABLE LUMBER



Green lumber piled in this manner will stain, warp, twist, and cup until it is not suitable for use. Much home-sawed lumber is wasted annually because of improper piling.