

Recycled Timber: Defect or Desired Features?

Recycled Messmate boards at Timberzoo are re-milled from recycled construction timbers. They were originally installed as green timber - structural joists, beams, rafters - and were seasoned over the life of the building, then removed during demolition. Structural hardwoods are more often backsawn rather than quartersawn and run-of-mill rather than graded for appearance. This means the boards show crown features, irregular colour, gum lines and natural features instead of the lineal, low-featured and uniform tones of quartersawn timber.

The construction source of recycled hardwoods will determine the 'attrition' features they exhibit. Purlins will have nail, screw or bolt holes; floor joist will show metal marks on one edge. Truss chords will exhibit bolt holes, notches and mortise features; ridge boards and ceiling hangers will show clusters of nail holes across the face of the board. Timber may show discoloration close to original surface intensified by oxidation and surface checking (fine shallow furrows or fracture on the surface of air-dried board). Black carbon staining can halo bolt or nail holes and chisel marks remain where metal fragments have been dug out.

Messmate or mixed Stringybarks?

Recycled construction timbers are unlikely to come as a single species batch. By convention, our recycled "messmate" has other stringybarks, and other coastal and montane forest species, in the packs. Silvertop Ash, Mountain Ash, Yellow Stringybark, Blue-leaf Stringybark, Blackbutt, and Tasmanian Blue Gum occur in the mix. None of these is dissimilar in colour and all are difficult to separate.

By rights, our industry should have adopted a product name that was not species-specific. At the time we were caught up in an important movement of the early 90s - which was to put these old but unfashionable timber names back on the menu for appearance-grade floors and furniture timbers, and to avoid the cringe euphemisms of the 1930-1960s such as Oak or Ash applied to native hardwoods. Intent on this new eucalypt nationalism, we didn't think far enough ahead - and the convention of calling Stringybarks "messmate" became set in concrete.

Other Species

The same general outline of attrition features in Victorian stringybarks is true for recycled Douglas Fir and for east coast eucalypt species such as Ironbark, Blackbutt, Spotted Gum, Tallowwood and Red Mahogany. The following is a list of desired attrition and natural features that are to be found in our range of timbers dressed and presented for sale - as well as rough-sawn structural and landscape grade stocks.

Surface checking	edge-notches	bolt holes	knot and adjacent feature
Gumlines	gum voids	hobnail	insect spirals and pinhole scatter
Black Speck	coffee stain	cross-grain	chatoyance and fiddleback
Nail Holes	black or carbon staining – usually around penetrations		
Teredo Worm Holes	internal drying check (limited)		surface oxidation, staining
Injury Overgrowth	clean pocketing	metal dig-outs	rebates and mortise holes
Raised grain on dressed cross-grain or fiddleback boards			pencil-streak

Our grading process is not intended to eliminate these features described above unless they are excessive or affect board integrity. Installation as an overlay flooring or lining board means many of these attrition features cause no detriment to the finished floor or wall.

Displays of finished flooring, lining boards and DAR loose boards and production packs are always available for inspection, and purchasers should inform themselves first-hand - and prior to purchase - of the essential nature of the product described here, as no claims will be heard in respect of grade, essential flaws as listed, colour or visible defect after purchase. Choose wisely as no returns, refunds or exchanges are possible if based upon expected or predictable recycled characteristics or change-of-mind.