

Tip #13 10 Tips to Store Wood

If you're like most of us, when you're busy on a project and stop to take a look around your shop, you probably see more lumber cluttering things up than anything else. The lumber and scraps for your current project . . . the cut-offs from your last project . . . and the stock you're planning to use for your next project. Lumber, lumber and more lumber -- and no place to put it where it'll be out of the way.

It's times like this when you realize that efficient lumber storage is every bit as important as efficient tool storage. Here are a few important factors to keep in mind when planning your lumber storage.

First, the place or places you choose to store your lumber should be well ventilated with plenty of opportunities for air circulation. Next, all wood should be stored in a dry area, out of direct sunlight and elevated about a foot off the ground to prevent direct contact with moisture.

If you're planning to use lumber that's been stored outside or in a shed, barn or detached garage where the humidity and temperature are uncontrolled, you should bring it into your shop area (assuming that your shop is temperature and humidity controlled) a couple of weeks before you start working on your project to give it a chance to stabilize before work begins.

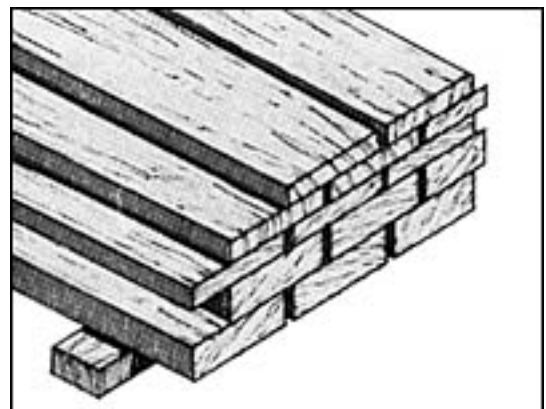
On the other hand, if you haven't purchased the lumber you'll be using for your project, and you're planning to buy it from a mill or other source that sells kiln dried lumber from a controlled storage environment (where you know the moisture content will be 8% or less), it's best to wait until you're ready to start work to buy your lumber.

Once kiln dried lumber has reached it's equilibrium moisture content, it's as dry as it will ever be (unless you live in Phoenix AZ or other arid desert location). If kiln dried wood sits in a damp environment (I.E. summer in the midwest), the wood will start to pick up moisture as it sits around. Shortly, the outside of the board will have a higher moisture content than the inside of the board. This will cause sawing problems. The wood will probably pinch the blade as it's cut and warp after the cut is complete. After a few months the wood will stabilize and again be usable.

So, the wood you plan to use "someday" (that has been in the loft of your garage in your basement for several years), is still wonderful, it just is no longer at 6% moisture content, but has reached its own equilibrium at more like 12% - 15%. This is still plenty dry for cabinet or furniture making (The early Philadelphia master craftsmen didn't have kilns), you just have to remember and plan for the fact that ALL wood will expand and contract every year through the seasons.

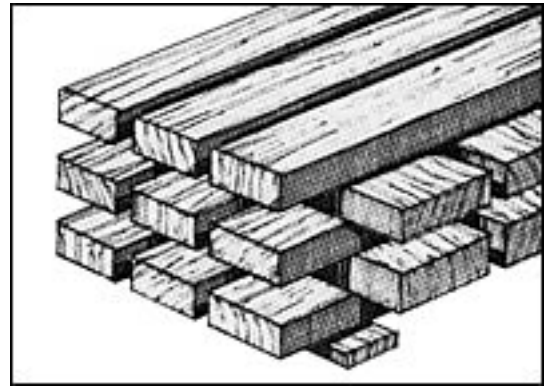
Tip Number 1

Kiln dried lumber . . . should be stored indoors, stacked flat and in even layers.



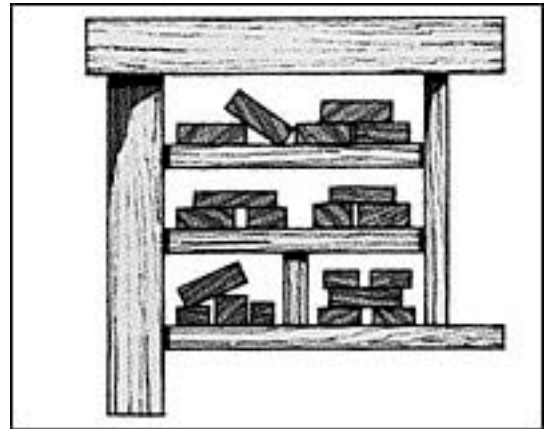
Tip Number 2

Green wood . . . must be well-supported if it is to dry evenly. When stacking, lay wood in a criss-cross fashion. Lay thinner wood every 18-24 inches with spacers.



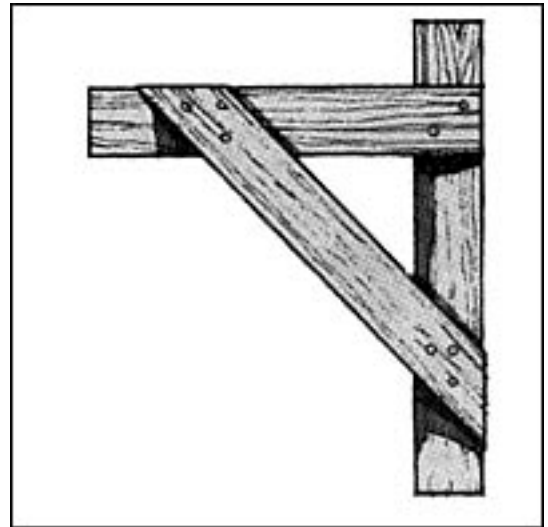
Tip Number 3

Under the bench . . . is the ideal place for storing short lengths of wood. A small rack like the one shown here helps you organize sizes and give the lumber room to breathe.



Tip Number 4

Wall brackets . . . are perfect for storing long lengths of wood because they're open-ended. Make them from common 2 x 4's and fasten them securely to wall studs, as shown here.



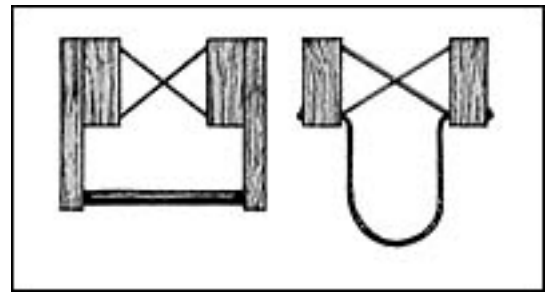
Tip Number 5

In the rafters . . . of your garage, you'll find plenty of space for lumber storage.



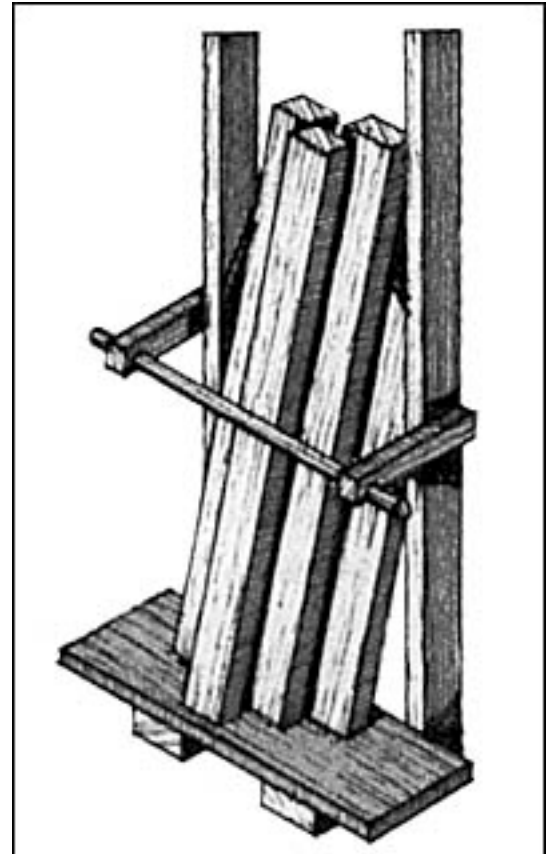
Tip Number 6

Between the overhead joists . . . nail U-shaped brackets or attach ropes to the joists every 3-4 feet. This approach is typically better for lumber that's shorter than 6-foot', since space is limited for maneuvering longer boards in a basement area.



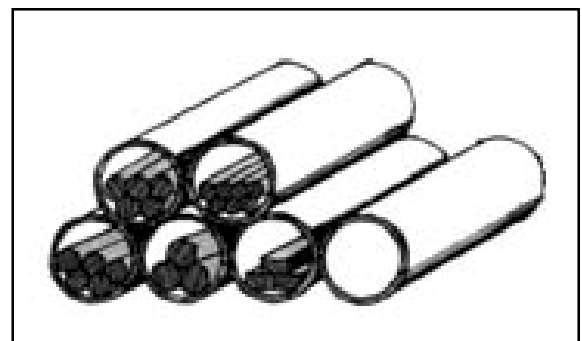
Tip Number 7

Vertical storage racks . . . are OK if you can't find a spot to store your lumber flat. Just be sure to store the wood as close to vertical as possible and secure it so it can't fall over.



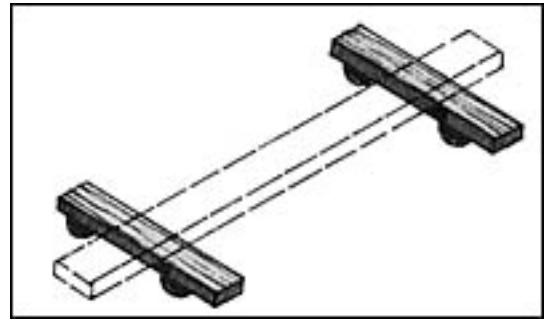
Tip Number 8

PVC pipe . . . makes another great storage rack for “shorts”, dowels and similar pieces. Just glue a number of PVC pipes together using ordinary PVC cement.



Tip Number 9

Movable storage . . . can be created by mounting casters on 24-inch lengths of 2 x 6's, as shown here. This approach allows you to move lumber from location-to-location in your shop, space permitting.



Tip Number 10

Sheet storage . . . should be designed so the lumber can lie flat, with heavier sheets on the bottom. If this isn't possible, sheets can be stored on edge . . . but should not be stored on end.

