

Growing Broadleaves for Quality Timber

Timber marketing

This Guidance Note is one of a series summarising information presented at a seminar on “Growing Broadleaves for Quality Timber”, held in February 2010 as part of FC Scotland’s Timber Development Programme. These notes provide information on all the main aspects of growing quality broadleaved timber, from choice of planting stock through to timber marketing, together with relevant references and links to more detailed information.

This presentation, which was delivered by Gavin Munro, is available for download through the [seminar web page](#).

Butts

The most important part of a hardwood sale is the butts (large diameter, good quality logs). These will generally fetch £230 - £650 a tonne. Prices increase for bigger diameter, longer or cleaner butts. Recent notable sales include a single walnut log fetching £2680 and 2.5 tonnes of sycamore fetching £4000. If the butt has good figuring even higher prices can be attained. Important defects that reduce the value of butts are:

- “shake”, which manifests itself as line running the length of the stem and along the grain of planks.
- non-centred heartwood which can cause problems in kilning.

Second lengths

These are logs from higher up the tree than butts, with longer lengths called beams (and the trees being referred to as beam trees). Second lengths generally fetch around £130-140 per tonne for species such as oak and elm. Second lengths of whitewoods such as sycamore can be used for carcassing and generally fetch prices of about £45 per tonne delivered.

Top lengths

These are the uppermost logs in a tree (down to 8” diameter) and are generally only suitable for fencing timber, typically fetching £90 per tonne.

Firewood

Firewood is important as the firewood market acts to underpin prices in the middle timber market. Currently firewood prices are at a historic high at £30-40 a tonne roadside. As

harvesting and extraction typically costs £17-19 per tonne, firewood production has become profitable for forest owners.

Species

Sweet chestnut: this species is potentially suitable for some parts of Scotland as it has timber properties similar to oak and can sell for similar prices.

Sycamore: this is one of Scotland's most valuable species, achieving higher prices than oak when felled in the correct season (pre-Christmas).

Oak: epicormics used to be a defect in oak, but now trees with a good 'pippy' figure can be sold at a 25-30% premium.

For a wider discussion of hardwood timber grading see Forestry Commission Research Technical Note 1/97 "Scottish hardwood timber grading: a brief guide" FR Technical Development Branch, Ae Village and for an account of visual grading of hardwood, see ["Making the grade – a guide to appearance grading UK grown hardwood timber"](#) (Davies and Watt, 2005).

References

Davies I. and Watt G., 2005, Making the Grade – A guide to appearance grading UK grown hardwood timber. Arcamedia, Edinburgh