OAK AND MAPLE, DRY AND OLD, KEEP AWAY THE WINTER COLD
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Firewood in some shape or manner plays a part in the lives of a large percentage of North Country citizens. For some of us it is the primary heat source that sustains us through the long, harsh winters endemic to the area.

The ways the heat is wrested from the raw material are many and varied, with different degrees of energy efficiency dependent on the wood species and the heater in which combustion takes place.

We have abundant supplies of the northern hardwood trees that are rated best for firewood growing locally. All that remains after deciding to incorporate wood as part of your heating needs is the best species for your needs.

A standard cord of seasonal acceptable hardwood firewood has about the same heating value as a ton of hard coal or 200 gallons of fuel oil. A standard cord of firewood is a stack of wood four feet high, four feet wide and eight feet long. A face cord is eight feet long by four feet high and by whatever length the wood is cut. Sixteen-inch-long pieces of wood piled with the above dimensions would be roughly one third of a standard cord.

As a way of comparison, high grade coal has a BTU (British Thermal Unit) of approximately 26,000,000 per ton. Two-hundred gallons of Number 2 fuel oil has a heating value of 28,000,000 BTUs. Heating values of some of our better local firewoods and their gross heating values per air-dry cord BTU are: Sugar Maple, 29,000,000; Beech, 27,800,000; Yellow Birch, 26,200,000; and White Ash, 25,000,000.

The most efficient recovery of the energy released by its burning is best accomplished by many of the different models of iron, air-tight stoves on the market today. By far the least efficient is any of the several types of open-faced fireplaces or stoves.

I have a fireplace insert fits directly into a standard iron heatalator common to most modern day fireplaces. The damper rusted off and it allowed more heat to escape up and out the chimney than it sent back into the room. The installation of a unit called tan Earth Stove proved efficient enough to heat our home for a winter season with 10 to

12 face cords of 12-inch wood.

Central to the unit is an EPA certified catalytic insert that easily pushes the interior temperature from 1600 to 1800 degrees F. It further demonstrates its efficiency in the few wood ashes one has to remove. It has an air-tight glass door that allows the light and warmth of the flames to be savored with none of the drawbacks and safety concerns associated with open fireplaces.

If one plans to use firewood for whatever reason, now is the time to get it to ensure its proper aging for next fall and winter use. The old adage used to be, "It warms you twice, once when you cut it and again when you take the ashes out." Anyone who burns wood, let alone cuts their own, can tell you that you are warmed many more times than twice.

The following is an old poem, author unknown, that gives some insight into the relative properties of the different species of wood. It may help you to determine which wood would best suit your needs.

Beechwood fires are bright and clear
If the logs are kept a year.
Chestnut's only good they say
If for long its laid away.
Birch and fir logs burn too fast
Blaze up bright and do not last.
Elm wood burns like churchyard mold
E'en the very flames are cold.
Popular gives a bitter smoke
Fills your eyes and makes you choke.
Apple wood will scent your room
With an incense like perfume.
Oak and maple if dry and old
Keep away the winter cold.
But ash wood wet and ash wood dry
A king will warm his slippers by.