

Buying wood or cutting your own?

LANCASTER — If you burn wood in your fireplace or in a woodburning stove, maintaining an adequate supply of well-seasoned, ready-to-burn wood is an essential. How you get it is important. And, what you get is perhaps even more important.

On the "how" side, there are many considerations. You may want to do-it-yourself. It may be the physical exercise, the outdoor activity involved that motivates you to cut, split, haul and stack your firewood. It may be the economics...if you provide the labor, it's got to be cheaper!

So, you buy a chain saw, a splitting maul and have access to a station wagon, van or pick-up to transport it.

You do need a source of wood. If you have your own woodlot, fine. If you have a friend with a woodlot or know a farmer with a fence row to cut, that, too, can satisfy the source question.

Given all the considerations mentioned, plus a few others, you should then jot down and tally up your best estimates of cost. Add one more item to your list. You won't be able to put a dollar figure on it, but it is important, your time. It does take time to harvest the firewood, process and stack it.

And this is a judgement decision only you can make.

A few woodburners have had their experiences with cutting their own and have opted to buy. The chore became too time-consuming, and then, too, there were problems in locating a source of wood.

Others from the beginning have chosen the "buy" route.

First, calculate your needs for the season. Locate a seller and look over what he has to offer and consider the price.

Be sure the wood is dry. Buy by volume, not weight. About half the weight of "green" wood, fresh-cut from living trees, can be water. Buy wood that is air-dried, seasoned and buy by volume.

Remember, there are several types of cords: standard, face, short, long, solid and more.

The standard cord is a "tightly

stacked pile of wood with all the pieces lying in the same direction, measuring 4 feet high, 8 feet wide and 4 feet long, or any other measures which multiply out to 128 cubic feet."

Pound for pound, all species of wood produce about the same amount of heat when burned; however, the weight for a given volume of wood, the density, varies considerably among the species.

Woods weighing 3500 to 4000 pounds per cord, (dry wood that is) are best. They include hickory, locust, dogwood, apple, hard maples, ash, beech, birch and oak.

Woods with moderate density include cherry, soft maples, walnut. These are considered to be "medium" in relative amount of heat produced.

The poorer burning quality woods include aspen, poplar, pine, spruce and other softwoods.

Firewood cutting may hurt wildlife

HARRISBURG — Homeowners trying to break the stranglehold of energy costs may see firewood as the solution to their problem, but indiscriminate cutting of trees may, in the long run, be quite harmful to wildlife.

Sometimes overly dense stands need to be thinned to benefit remaining trees, but forestry and wildlife management practices need to be understood before cutting is done.

State game lands are purchased and managed primarily for the production of wildlife, and unsupervised firewood cutting can have a severe impact on the welfare of many birds and mammals. Some may think dead wood is worthless and should be cut up, but such is not always the case. It may be a death sentence for countless birds and animals.

Numerous bird and mammal species have evolved to fit narrow

and specific places in nature. Without a hole in a dead tree, for instance, the redheaded woodpecker won't nest. Without nesting, redheaded woodpeckers will disappear. It's that simple!

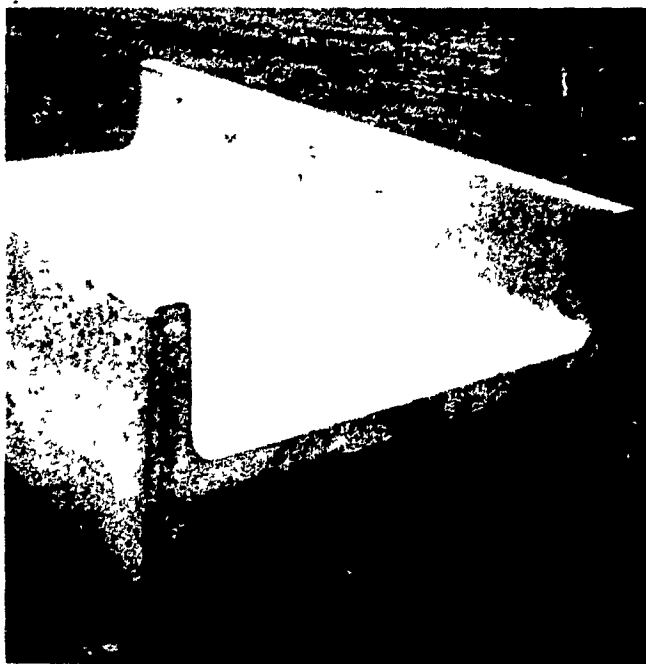
Backyard feeders are frequented by chickadees — birds which depend on dead trees to provide holes for their "homes." Raccoons, nuthatches, fox squirrels, bluebirds, screech owls, flycatchers, wrens and many other birds and animals also depend on tree cavities.

The importance of den trees has long been recognized by wildlife managers, who arrange with foresters to leave sufficient numbers of them intact when planning timbering operations.

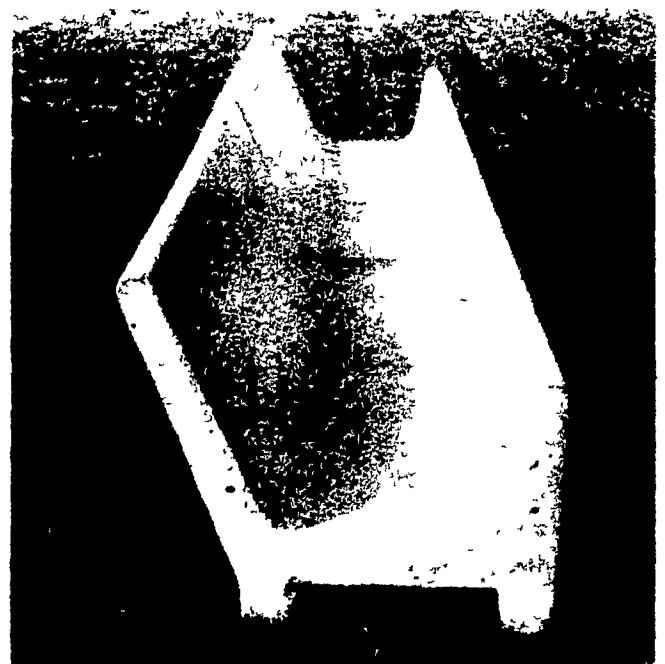
Great care must be taken before undertaking firewood cutting, and there must be planning for the well-being of wildlife.

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