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Wood For Heat

(1:30)

If a wood stove or fireplace figures in your heating plan for this winter, the time for buying or cutting wood is at hand. Extension Forest Products Specialist Lewis Hendricks says heat values are not the only basis for wood selection. Ease of starting, fragrance and sparking are also factors to consider.

Wood should be air dried after cutting for most efficient burning. Green wood that is dried under cover may be brought to the proper moisture content for burning in six to nine months. Good air circulation, piling for maximum end-grain exposure and splitting larger pieces insures faster drying.

Burning green wood is not recommended because it can cause heavy buildup of creosote, a tar-like substance, in stove or fireplace flues. Creosote can ignite in a chimney or stovepipe or it can ooze out onto walls. Among the common woods that provide maximum heat are oak, maple, locusts, hickory and beech. These woods are generally more difficult to ignite, but they produce few sparks and burn down into coals for lingering heat.

Woods rated good or excellent for starting ease include pine, cedar and hemlock. These are less dense woods and do not produce as much heat per cord of wood. They also generate more sparks and fewer coals. If a fragrant fire is your goal, apple and cherry woods are best. Other fragrant woods include maple, cedar, hemlock and pine.

Extension Service meetings on using woodburning stoves and fireplaces efficiently will be at four Minnesota locations starting December 5th at the St. Paul Campus. Contact your county Extension Office for more information.

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