

Firewood

Summer is the best time to buy firewood.

Why now? To burn well, wood needs time to dry. And in spring and summer prices for firewood are generally lower.

To keep a woodburner going most evenings throughout winter, you'll need a total wood supply of about 10 cubic metres. We surveyed prices of the most commonly available types of firewood – gum, macrocarpa and pine (see Table).

Buying it

You may buy firewood by the cubic metre, but how do you know that the scoop of wood dumped on your trailer is the full deal? The Ministry of Consumer Affairs' Measurement and Product Safety Service (MAPPS) certifies vehicles to hold a stated volume and there's also an approved one cubic measurement, which can be used to accurately measure volumes of firewood (and landscaping materials).

Which wood? Pine and macrocarpa are softwoods. They dry in six to 12 months, depending on the condition of the wood when you bought it. They also burn rapidly.

Hardwoods such as gum have greater heat content by volume and burn slowly – but freshly felled gum can take up to 18 months to dry.

Burning it

It's important that wood is properly dry before you put it on the fire.

Last year we measured the emissions from various types of firewood. Damp wood and large logs (over 110mm in diameter) were the most likely to produce smoke and soot.

Firewood should have less than 25 percent moisture. You can test it by throwing a small piece on to glowing embers in your woodburner. If it catches fire on the top and sides within one minute, it's dry enough to burn well.

The cleanest-burning wood in our woodburner emissions test (*Consumer 457*) was seasoned blue gum.

We say

- ▶ Buy your wood well before winter, when prices are low.
- ▶ Ask whether the merchant delivers firewood in a MAPPS-approved measure.
- ▶ If you want to use the wood straight away ask about its condition – green wet wood won't be "fit for the purpose" under the Consumer Guarantees Act.
- ▶ Stack the wood to dry under cover – but somewhere where there's plenty of airflow. Split large bits and remove some of the bark to speed up drying. Make sure nothing is more than 110mm in diameter.
- ▶ Don't burn treated wood, painted wood, or driftwood. They produce dioxins and other toxic substances when they burn.



Firewood prices	Price per m ³ (\$)		
	Gum	Macrocarpa	Pine
AUCKLAND	100	90	75
WELLINGTON	104	93	71
NORTH ISLAND PROVINCIAL	65	55	50
CHRISTCHURCH	80	77	55
DUNEDIN	75	65	50
SOUTH ISLAND PROVINCIAL	60	60	44

GUIDE TO THE TABLE Prices are per cubic metre, and are the midpoints from a price survey of 76 retailers during December 2006 and January 2007.

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