

## Sassafras: *Atherosperma moschatum*

**Other common names:** Tasmanian Sassafras, Southern Sassafras

**The Timber** Of all Tasmanian timbers, Sassafras has the most variable and dynamic colouring. It is a beautiful and pale creamy grey to white normally but can be streaked with rich browns and black heart. It is available in two major groupings: Golden Sassafras and Blackheart Sassafras.

Finishing to a grey and golden tone, Golden Sassafras is particularly attractive as a veneer or as a solid timber with knots providing figure. If the tree is infected with a staining fungus it produces Blackheart Sassafras. Blackheart is a timber with distinctive dark brown, black, and even green streaks running through the wood. Blackheart is highly prized for decorative work and bowl turning as no two pieces are ever the same.

Sassafras is versatile. While the wood is light and strong, it is rather soft and easily worked. Renowned in furniture use as a solid, a veneer or a laminated board, Sassafras is used for panelling, mouldings, joinery, veneers, cabinet-making and turnery.

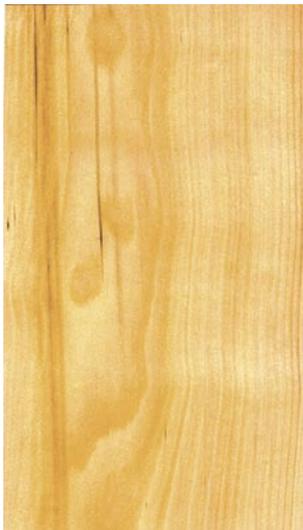
**The Resource** Sassafras grows as an understorey species in lower altitude wet forests throughout Tasmania. It is not related to the timbers known as Sassafras that grow on mainland Australia. It is an aromatic evergreen tree with some quite distinctive qualities; the bark, sap, and associated oils are highly aromatic and smell like cinnamon, while its leaves have a strong sarsaparilla scent. The leaves are dark green, turning yellow as the tree ages. The best trees are found in gullies where Sassafras may reach 45m in height and almost 1 metre in diameter.

Sassafras is a component of wet eucalypt forest and young rain forest where it may live for up to 150–200 years. It is a heavy seed producer although germination can be erratic. Seedlings are subject to heavy browsing by native animals and many young trees become established where they are inaccessible, on mounds or on man fern trunks.

Much Sassafras establishes as coppice or multi-stemmed trunks.

Sassafras timber will always be accessible to the furniture industry in company with other forest produce. While wet mixed and eucalypt forests are sustainably harvested for eucalypt veneer and sawlogs, Sassafras will be available as a by-product.





## Sassafras properties

<b>Colour</b>	The sapwood of Sassafras is white or greyish, the heartwood can be similarly pale or stained black ("blackheart").
<b>Grain</b>	Grain is fairly straight, even and smooth.
<b>Texture</b>	Fine and uniform.
<b>Durability</b>	Sassafras is not included in AS 5604-2005 Timber - Natural durability ratings. It has good durability for decorative, architectural and structural applications internally but is not recommended for external use. The in-ground durability of heartwood is low.
<b>Lyctid susceptibility</b>	Sapwood is not susceptible.
<b>Sizes</b>	Sassafras is usually available in the seasoned condition. Undressed squares are available up to 75mm. Most production is of lengths less than 1.8m.
<b>Density</b>	Approximately 600kg/m <sup>3</sup> at 12% moisture content.
<b>Shrinkage</b> (green to 12% MC)	Approximately 2.5% radial, 6.5% tangential.
<b>Movement</b>	Between 25% and 5% MC, radial movement is approximately 0.23% per 1% MC change; tangential movement about 0.36% per 1% MC change.
<b>Strength groups</b>	Seasoned SD5, unseasoned S6.
<b>Joint group</b>	Seasoned JD3, unseasoned J3.
<b>Structural grades</b>	Not used structurally.
<b>Toughness (Izod)</b>	13J seasoned.
<b>Hardness (Janka)</b>	4.7kN seasoned.

## Workability

<b>General</b>	Tasmanian Sassafras works easily and cleanly, and is well suited for turning. It is an excellent bending timber, and has a low tendency to split.
<b>Blunting</b>	Moderate.
<b>Sawing</b>	Cuts cleanly and accurately with standard blades. Rip-sawing requires high feeding forces and low feed rates.
<b>Planing</b>	Moderate feeding forces required.
<b>Moulding</b>	Produces good mouldings.
<b>Boring</b>	Easy to drill. Holes are clean and to size.
<b>Rebating + mortising</b>	Generally produces good results.
<b>Turning</b>	Turns very well.
<b>Nailing</b>	All nail holes must be pre-drilled.
<b>Gluing</b>	Glues satisfactorily with most common adhesives.
<b>Bending</b>	An excellent bending timber. 25mm material bends well to a radius of 75mm.
<b>Finishing</b>	Readily worked to a smooth, lustrous surface. Most finishes adhere very well. Dark stains tend to look "blotchy".

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Due to the printing process, the colours shown are indicative only.