

## Myrtle: *Nothofagus cunninghamii*

Other common names: Beech, Myrtle Beech, Tasmanian Myrtle and Australian Cherry

### The Timber

Myrtle is a striking wood with rich red, brown and almost orange tones. It makes an excellent veneer and finishing timber. It is believed the richness of colour comes from the quality of the soil it grows in. The deepest red myrtle comes from highly fertile soils on basalt. The colour is vibrant, combining subtle variations in tone with the texture and sheen of wavy and fiddleback features to produce a surface alive with character and individuality. While a pale and pink myrtle is available, commercial production concentrates on the deeper red variety. It is a close grained species with well defined annual rings but with little latewood.

Myrtle's fine aesthetic qualities are matched by its working properties. It is particularly easy to work and makes an excellent veneer.

Taking on a deep lustre when polished, Myrtle is prized by architects and furniture makers alike. It is used as a solid or veneer in high quality furniture, joinery, cabinet-making and feature panelling in homes and offices, or as a striking finishing timber for cornices, architraves and skirting.

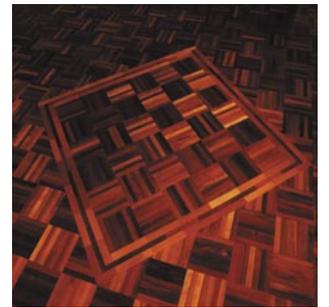
It has further applications for craft workers. Myrtle turns well and traditionally has been used for spindle turning and bowls. Craft workers particularly favour burls and knotty wood.

### The Resource

Myrtle is found in any of the wet forests across Tasmania, more frequently in the north-west and west of the State. Provided that conditions are moist and sheltered, the tree flourishes from sea level to the tree line.

Myrtle regenerates continuously in the absence of fire, growing in openings in the stand if conditions are moist and sheltered. In exposed areas myrtle can be susceptible to insect and fungal attack which damages the timber and kills the tree, making it unsuitable for growth in plantations.

Increases in Tasmania's forest reserves have restricted the supply of Myrtle which in the future will come from selective harvesting of forests grown on longer rotations.





## Myrtle properties

<b>Colour</b>	Myrtle heartwood is pale pink to deep red, occasionally with pale yellow-grey streaks. Sapwood is white to light pink.
<b>Grain</b>	Grain is mainly straight and occasionally wavy with clearly visible growth rings.
<b>Texture</b>	Fine, uniform and smooth.
<b>Durability</b>	In-ground contact: Class 4. Outside above ground: Class 3. Termite resistance of heartwood: Not resistant. Refer to AS 5604-2005 Timber - Natural durability ratings.
<b>Lyctid susceptibility</b>	Sapwood is susceptible.
<b>Sizes</b>	Dressed seasoned timber 40 to 300mm wide by 12 to 40mm thick. Undressed seasoned timber 25 to 300mm wide by 25 to 50mm thick.
<b>Density</b>	Approximately 700kg/m <sup>3</sup> at 12% moisture content. Unseasoned density approximately 1100kg/m <sup>3</sup> .
<b>Shrinkage (green to 12% MC)</b>	Approximately 3% radial, 6.5% tangential before reconditioning; 2.5% radial and 4.5% tangential after reconditioning.
<b>Movement</b>	Between 25% and 5% MC, radial movement is approximately 0.18% per 1% MC change; tangential movement about 0.32% per 1% MC change.
<b>Strength groups</b>	Seasoned SD5, unseasoned S4.
<b>Joint group</b>	Seasoned JD3, unseasoned J3.
<b>Structural grades</b>	Most commonly available structural grade is number 3; F11 seasoned, F8 unseasoned.
<b>Toughness (Izod)</b>	12J unseasoned, 13J seasoned.
<b>Hardness (Janka)</b>	4.4kN unseasoned, 5.9kN seasoned.

## Fire hazard properties: flooring (AS ISO 9239.1)

<b>Critical radiant heat flux</b>	> 4.5kW/m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Smoke development rate</b>	< 750%.min

## Fire hazard properties: wall and ceiling lining (AS/NZ 3837)

<b>Material group no.</b>	3
<b>Average extinction area</b>	< 250m <sup>2</sup> /kg

## Workability

<b>General</b>	Myrtle cuts relatively cleanly and may be easily dressed to a smooth, lustrous surface.
<b>Blunting</b>	Moderate.
<b>Sawing</b>	Cuts very cleanly and accurately with standard blades.
<b>Planing</b>	Moderate feeding forces required. Surfaces can be planed very smooth and lustrous.
<b>Moulding</b>	Surfaces are true and clean; even end grain.
<b>Boring</b>	Easy to drill. Holes are clean and to size.
<b>Rebating + mortising</b>	Very good results may be obtained with relative ease.
<b>Turning</b>	Turns very well.
<b>Nailing</b>	Nails very well, material does not tend to split. Pre-drilling is often necessary in seasoned material. Nails hold well.
<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. Staining can be difficult.

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