PROPER STORAGE AND PREPARATION OF FIREWOOD

Most of us will never be able to buy properly seasoned wood which would be ready to be used straight away. When buying wood it is important to know what type of wood is being supplied and what size has it been cut to. In output terms wood is rated as follows, based on heat output in gigajoule per cubic metre.

Air dried condition	Oak 6.3
	Beech 6.3
	Ash 6.1
	Sycamore 5.5
	Poplar 4.5
	Pine 5.0
	Spruce 4.6
	Larch 5.4
	Douglas Fir 5.1

Maximum diameter of firewood should be no greater than 150mm, 100mm is preferred (larger or round logs should always be split straight away) drying times vary, from 34 years for Oak, 1 year for Ash and generally 2 years for most woods.

The ideal time to buy your wood is early spring, on delivery the wood should be stacked either one log deep against a wall in a sunny location (south facing) or loosely stacked in the open, again in a sunny location with no cover.

Leave the wood like this until early autumn, it should then be moved into proper log stores with weather protection. A good log store is open at the sides with a roof to prevent the wood from getting soaked. And this should be located in a position where it would still be in sun light in mid winter.

When the wood is ready to burn, it should be light in colour or greyish, the end grain should have open radial cracks and when dropped to the ground it should made a loud crack rather than a dull thud. If you have a moisture meter the wood should read less than 20%.

In very cold weather bring the wood in a few days before use. This will reduce the moisture content further.

Symptoms of poor fuel

The wood starts to burn but, chars quickly and may to go out.
The fuel can make a loud hissing noise when you open the door.
The fire may start well, but the fire bricks and then the glass may go black.
A bright fire with lots of flame but no real heat from appliance.
A strong smell in the area around appliance.
Condensation in the form of black water coming out of the appliance and flue system.

Any wood fired appliance should easily reach 300°F / 149°C.
If it fails to reach this temperature check the wood.