



Dorset Coppice Group – Typical Products from Dorset Woodlands

The members of the Dorset Coppice Group produce a wide and varied range of sustainable wood products; these products and producers are listed in the Woodland Directory. Each member has signed a declaration that they only use 'local sustainable wood', this gives the customer the re-assurance that the product they purchase is helping to retain Dorset's woodland, and retain the ancient skills of these crafts. Some members are also included in 'Direct from Dorset', which is an accreditation that is monitored and checked by Dorset Trading Standards. (Link.)

Hedge Laying & Restoration

Since World War II various incentives and agricultural up-heavals have seen miles of hedgerow destroyed or neglected. They are now recognised as vital wildlife refuges that have real benefit to agriculture through natural pest control and providing shelter for livestock. They also contribute to Dorset's unique beauty and should be cherished for all these reasons.

A number of grants are available to assist with the cost of restoring neglected hedgerows and also for their maintenance. Restoring and maintaining hedgerows requires real skill that is available through a number of our members. Landowners and farmers are also advised to get information from the FWAG and English Nature offices on flailing regimes etc.

Besoms

Commonly made from Birch or heather, the heads are renowned for pulling moss from lawns and clearing wet leaves, an ideal gardener's companion. Swales (i.e. Besoms without handles) were also used by a wide variety of industries and these days it is still used by some steel workers for cleaning scale from red-hot steel (it also somehow improves the quality of the steel) and also clarifying vinegar.

Wattle Hurdles

Hurdles have been found on the Somerset levels where they were used to cross the wetlands. Wattle & daub huts were used by many of our ancestors from the Iron Age through to the Middle Ages where they were widely used for fencing. There was a huge demand for hurdles for folding the sheep, and were used extensively throughout Dorset with the flocks of Dorset Down Sheep. They provided a portable fencing panel, that was light enough for the shepherd to carry four at a time. They were used for folding or penning the sheep when grazing, being dipped or sheared. They also provided shelter for the ewes and lambs at lambing time, as they gave protection from the wind and rain. Today's farming methods have replaced the wattle hurdle with lambing sheds and electric fencing. In the garden they provide shelter without creating turbulence and eddies associated with other boundaries.





Charcoal

Charcoal is carbonised wood, made by “charring” wood with reduced air. Charcoal burns with approximately twice the heat of wood, and with little smoke, which unique characteristics make it ideal for cooking and iron working. It is very porous and is used in filters; it is also a basic component in gunpowder. Unlike many imported brands of charcoal (that often come from tropical rainforests or mangroves) coppice charcoal is made only of pure lumpwood.

As a result, you get a charcoal with the following advantages;

Easy to light

No need for firelighters

Ready to cook in 10-15 minutes

Burns hotter and longer than many imported brands

Promotes the sustainable management of your local woods

Faggots

Traditionally used by bakers to fuel their ovens, faggots (bundles of brash tied in lengths of 3-10 feet) are now being used by a number of conservation bodies in riverbank and coastal protection. This 'soft' approach to bank repair has numerous advantages over 'hard' solutions such as steel and concrete revetment because it allows the bank to stay alive with wild-life, uses natural materials (and so benefits the coppice and river ecosystems simultaneously) and dissipates the energy of the river/ocean. Some members are able to provide this service for private landowners and homeowners to stop rivers eroding gardens or fields at a reasonable cost.

Firewood

A natural bi-product of woodland work, buying firewood from your local coppice merchant has the following benefits. The material is of higher calorific value than many softwood firewood's i.e. they burn hotter and longer. You are contributing to the sustainable management of Dorset's woodlands. Dealing directly can save costs whilst supporting the local economy

Furniture

There is a wide range of styles of furniture available from coppice craftsmen that combine traditional skills and modern designs to provide you with a high quality finished product. Be it bent-wood chairs, garden arbours or stools and chairs made by bodgers you can find something for every taste and style which will be unique to your garden or conservatory.

Green-Wood Turning/Bodging

Although the last full-time bodger stopped working in the 1950's the craft remains alive through a large and growing number of pole-lathe turners. In addition to stools and chairs the pole lathe can also be used to make rattles, honey sticks, dibbers and bowls etc. Because each piece is hand turned every piece of work is unique and of the highest quality, reflecting the turners skill and the intrinsic qualities of the wood used.





Hay Rakes

Made from ash a hay-rake is light, durable and stylish. Another craft that used to be essential for agriculture that is showing a revival in the modern garden.

Cleft Gate Hurdles

Traditionally used by farmers for penning their livestock, Cleft Gate Hurdles are becoming increasingly popular in gardens for they're aesthetic qualities as well as their strength and durability.

Walking Sticks

The raw materials for the sticks are cut out of hedge and coppice and must be hung to dry for two years before any fashioning can begin.

Different Sorts Of Walking Sticks

1. WALKER – a stick that comes up to your hip joint.
2. MARKET STICK – a stick that is taller than “a walker”. It is one you can rest and relax on by leaning on it with your hands or lower arm. Good for when you are watching something or having a natter.
3. HILL STICK - this is a longer stick as a support and used by hikers. You put the shank in front of you and use the stick as a support until you are going past it. Then you use it to push yourself along.

WORKING STICKS

1. CROOK - A shepherd's crook is designed to fit around the neck of a sheep. But there are also crooks designed for working with chickens, geese and swans.
2. THUMB STICK - this stick has a v shape or hole for your thumb

** Taken from “ A little book of walking sticks” by Trevor Harries.*