



Sugar Gum

A unique farm plantation timber

THE SUGAR GUM STORY

Planted by early settlers to provide shelter for their flocks of sheep grazing on the treeless plains of western Victoria, sugar gum today grows over thousands of hectares across many hundreds of farms in wide belts of mature trees.

Native to South Australia, sugar gum was found to be the best species suited to the harsh conditions of the Western District. After a series of trials, sugar gum was grown as the preferred shelterbelt species from 1887.

For over 100 years farmers have harvested the hardy sugar gum

for firewood, posts and poles. Readily coppicing from the stump, farmers have always fenced in the plantations to protect new growth, ensuring the sugar gum regrew once again to offer shelter and shade to their livestock.

SMARTimbers' innovation is to redirect the best logs for milling and kiln drying, rescuing them from a fate as firewood. Similar to Cinderella, SMARTimbers is raising sugar gum from the ashes to become recognised for its versatility and timber beauty. The end result has been the production of a premium furniture and appearance timber, as well as durable external cladding and decking.

Since the volumes of milled sugar gum are limited to a sustainable yield of approximately 1,500 tonnes per year, it is expected that sugar gum will continue into the future as an exclusive, specialty timber.

In the long term this may change, as for the first time since the 1920s, investor funding of new plantings, as well as improved management of mature plantations, is leading to an expansion of the sugar gum plantation base.

Chairman of SMARTimbers Andrew Lang is the great great grandson of Andrew Lang Currie one of the pioneers who introduced sugar gum to the Western District of Victoria. With his daughter Eleanor in a sugar gum plantation on their property 'Titanga.'





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Similar to jarrah but blonde, more durable and sustainable

Sugar gum is a dense, blonde to tan, plantation grown native timber that polishes to a superb finish for the production of quality furniture and flooring. With a Category I durability rating, sugar gum is particularly suited to situations requiring high strength or facing high wear.

Research by CSIRO has found that of the four native hardwood species commonly grown in Victoria, sugar gum (*Eucalyptus cladocalyx*) is the outstanding species.

Timber characteristics

Sugar gum is a light, tan coloured, extremely dense timber, generally with little defect. Clear timbers have the highest strength rating. Because of its hardness it polishes to a superb finish. Some trees yield wood with desirable grain feature such as beeswing and fiddleback. It is suitable for many uses including stair treads, flooring, indoor and outdoor furniture, decking and bench tops.

Shrinkage

About 6% through, and 10.5% across the face of backsawn boards.

Sugar gum air dries relatively slowly due to its density. It can be air dried without surface checking or degrade. Similarly, it kiln dries well with no or minimal checking and degrade. Like all Australian hardwoods, shrinkage and expansion in service is a natural process. Standard laying techniques for hardwood flooring should be used to manage movement.

Fixing

For most applications the high density and strength of seasoned sugar gum requires pre-drilling with a titanium coated bit to about 80% of the nail or screw diameter. Secret-nail flooring does not require pre-drilling.

Glueing

Should only be done on freshly machined surfaces. Quick drying two pack PVA glues perform satisfactorily. Further testing is being done with other glues by CSIRO. Construction using biscuit-jointed corners, floating panels, and clip attached table and bench tops is generally preferred.

Finishes

Organic timber oils give a most attractive dark honey colour to the surface. French polishing and synthetic 'Estapol' type finishes are also used. The latter shows up the subtle greens and pinks sometimes seen in the dressed timber.

Veneering

Available for a variety of architectural veneer products. Veneers are an environmentally



friendly way to enjoy the beauty and warmth of timber while minimising the consumption of the renewable resource, by cutting the timber into very thin slices (0.6mm).

Outdoor

Unfinished, it weathers to a silver grey and develops superficial fine checking. Suitably finished it has excellent outdoor weathering performance.

Technical specifications

Properties

- > Colour – blonde to tan
- > Grain – fine, close, even
- > Strength – green F17, dry F27
- > Hardness (Janka) – High
- > Durability – Category 1 in ground for heartwood (over 25 years)
- > Density – 950-1050kg/m³ at 10% moisture
- > Impact resistance – very high
- > Shrinkage in service – minimal
- > Electrical resistance – very high

Sugar gum products

- > Veneer 0.6mm thick in widths between 150-250mm and in lengths up to 2600mm
- > Flooring 80x19mm, 80x12mm (floating). Wider boards possible subject to availability
- > Panelling 80x12mm. Wider panelling possible subject to availability
- > Weatherboards – 170x25mm square edge and natural edge
- > Decking 60x19mm, 80x19mm radial sawn square or curved profiles
- > Rough sawn dried (10%mc) in widths 75 to 300mm and 20-50mm thick
- > Made to order architectural products such as poles and wedges

Sourced from farm plantations

Our timber comes to you with a warranty of origin, soon to be upgraded to an internationally recognised certificate of sustainable management. SMARTimbers sugar gum is traceable back to the source in a farm plantation. Our members have a commitment to best practice in managing their farm plantations.

We carefully mill, dry, grade and store this timber, aiming to supply the best quality material to furniture makers, architects and builders. SMARTimbers will supply green and dried sugar gum in all the usual dimensions. Our commitment is to sustainability, quality assurance and prompt personal service.

Further Information contact John Reed at SMARTimbers

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