

FESSENDEN



FIREWOOD

Since 1973

Yard: Hoffman at 30th Street – Richmond, California
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SPRING 2015 NEWSLETTER • 42nd ANNIVERSARY

HELLO EVERYBODY, it's time to gear up for FFs summer sale. I'm excited about the sale, but I'm also grinding my teeth a bit too, because I'm getting old, and I know I'll be working hard in the upcoming months. Even with wood splitters and dump trucks, firewood is hard physical work. But I've always liked the physical work, because it is grounding — like a fire is — grounding and calming and centering.

There are several really good reasons for firewood customers to buy their wood in the summer:

The biggest one is the price — cordwood is way cheaper in the summer, especially for those buying more than one cord (because of the multiple cord discounts). Also, FF is **WAIVING THE DELIVERY CHARGE** for orders placed before July 4th, for even greater savings. Do our customers notice this? It seems like more of you could (should?) take advantage of this additional savings.

The wood is going to be really dry this summer, because of all the warm, rainless days last winter. Also, some of the wood that was cut for last winter season wasn't sold. Early in the sale we may be selling last years surplus wood — already super dry.

Generally speaking, it's best to purchase firewood before the rainy season (what rainy season?!). We tarp the wood in our yard, but none of our suppliers cover their wood (it would be impossible for them to do so). When the big storms come, wood that is delivered to our yard can be wet.

Traffic congestion is a major issue in the Bay Area, but during the summer the traffic is noticeably lighter. Conversely, during the holidays traffic is usually horrible. A summertime wood purchase is easier and less stressful for both the customer and the delivery person.

It's nicer to stack wood when the days are long and the weather pleasant, whether you the customer do it or you hire us to do it.

FF is sometimes unable to offer our stacking service during the holidays, because of the heavy demand for firewood (remember that we sell firewood bundles to convenience stores, as well as cordwood to homeowners). This was the case last year, because of all the rain in December (even though it was the worst year ever for firewood, the holiday period was hectic). The point is, if you the customer needs your wood stacked, please place your order in the summer or early fall.



The big issue with firewood is that the Air Quality Board is trying to eliminate the wood business all together. Their very aggressive approach, coupled with the fact that both Chris and I are 67, and have been selling firewood for over forty years — well, the feeling is that this is a goodbye letter to our customers.

There are a few things I want to say:

First, we are so grateful for the support of all of you, many of whom have been buying from us since the 80s (and even the 70s in some cases). I know that occasionally the wood wasn't as dry as it could have been, or that sometimes we'd get a little defensive when a problem cropped up in the delivery. I always felt like an outsider who was barely making it economically. Our customers must have seen something in our little wood company however, because many kept coming back to us. Thanks to you our customers — you could have gone elsewhere for your firewood. It is because of the support of our customers that Chris and I were able to make a life for ourselves. FF has been part of Bay Area life for decades now, and that's not something that we did on our own. Thanks to all of you for your courtesy and support!

And thanks also to the restaurants that use our wood in their wood burning ovens, and also to the campgrounds and convenience stores that sell our bundled firewood (in the last few years, this has been most of our business).

Also want to acknowledge the FF drivers, Eleuterio and Gerardo, and our yard laborers, Jose, Moises and Felipe. They split the wood, load the trucks, help with stacking, make bundles, etc. Nothing but hard physical work. Yet they do it without much complaint, even with a pushy boss with often unreasonable expectations.



The Air Quality Board may not realize it yet, but they've already won. There are very few yards left in the Bay Area that still sell wood to homeowners. One never knows whether its because of the warm, dry winters we've been having, or whether its because of all the "spare the air days", but there is far less wood being sold in the Bay Area than there was 15 or 20 years ago. And most of the wood that is sold is sold to restaurants, where it is used for cooking.

I don't dispute that wood smoke can be a health hazard, but so is the exhaust from jet planes and city buses, big rigs and oil refineries. Because the Air Quality Board has done such a good job with its negative publicity campaign regarding wood smoke pollution, fireplaces aren't being used so much anymore. But jet planes and big rigs are still being used, and gasoline is still being produced at the refineries. It's not firewood that creates air pollution as much as the American way of life as a whole. But then, how much is gained by focusing entirely on one small contributor to air pollution and ignoring all the other parts?

An approach that makes more sense would be to encourage those who burn wood in their fireplace to install a clean burning stove or insert. This could be facilitated with tax rebates or tax credits. Wood heat is relaxing, soothing, delicious. Because of the drought, for the next several years there will be a plentiful supply of relatively cheap orchard wood (Almond is a great wood for heating!) from the Central Valley. Stoves and inserts sold today are all EPA certified. It's a perfect picture — wouldn't it be better to encourage wood usage in a way that is healthy, rather than criminalizing it?

The firewood world is a small world. A chainsaw, wood splitter, pick-up and a couple of strong backs is all that is required for producing cordwood. Natural gas is clean burning, but natural gas comes with thousand mile pipelines, huge infrastructure, multi-billion dollar energy conglomerates. It is a difference in scale. Firewood fosters intimacy and connection, whereas the energy conglomerates foster growth and profits. Which is the preferred direction? A return to a romanticized notion of what the past was rarely works for either the individual or the community. On the other hand, a future based on continual growth looks dark also, especially given the ongoing drought.



Many of our customers are older. Many are on fixed incomes, so the savings that wood heat provides is important to them. But more than the economic benefits, it is the intangibles of a wood fire that keeps them burning their fires. I've said it before, but wood heat adds something to a living room or den that can't be received any other way. Meditative, relaxing, soothing — all the words fit, yet there is more — something about the glowing coals of an oak fire that is peaceful, and balancing, and wise.

■ ■ ■ **RANDOM NOTES** ■ ■ ■

We are asked a thousand times a year: which is better, almond or oak? And I reply that everyone has their own opinions: some people like oak the best and some are crazy about almond. Both are classic hardwood, great for heating up a house. Almond trees are small and branchy, so the pieces tend to be smaller than the oak pieces. Almond burns hotter and with less ash than oak, but the chunky oak pieces produce coals that can radiate heat all night.

For customers who are unsure about what they want, I recommend the oak-almond mix, because there is a nice mix of sizes — smaller pieces of almond mixed with chunky, long burning oak. Those who prefer oak often will have part of the cord resplit; also resulting in a nice mix of sizes, with smaller pieces that can work as kindling.

Almond is really dense — walnut is a better choice as a starter wood. Some of our customers are under the impression that in the oak-almond mix, the almond is the starter wood. This isn't really the case, because almond is just as hard as oak.

We began resplitting almond and oak for the restaurants, because pizza ovens work best with small pieces of wood. For the last twenty years we have been offering our resplitting service to customers who prefer really small, split pieces. Customers who request our resplitting service typically have a portion of their cord resplit — a ¼ cord, or a ½ cord, for instance. The price is \$15 per quarter cord.

We will have a few cords of 24" oak, but please order early.

Delivery charges subject to change.

Visit our website: fessendenfirewood.com

2-TIERED 2015

WE WILL WAIVE THE DELIVERY CHARGE FOR ALL ORDERS PLACED BEFORE July 4th, except for West Marin and the Peninsula. For orders in Antioch, Clayton, San Ramon and San Francisco, there will be a \$10.00 delivery charge.

	PRICES THROUGH JULY 15				PRICES JULY 15 - AUGUST 15			
	1/2 cord	1 cord	1.5 cord	2 cords	1/2 cord	1 cord	1.5 cord	2 cords
16" Oak or Almond or Oak/Almond mix	\$ 225.00	\$ 380.00	\$ 557.50	\$ 735.00	\$ 230.00	\$ 390.00	\$ 577.50	\$ 770.00
16" Oak/Walnut or Almond/Walnut	\$ 215.00	\$ 365.00	\$ 535.00	\$ 705.00	\$ 217.50	\$ 370.00	\$ 547.50	\$ 730.00

Kindling is \$6 per bag, through Sept. 15th

■ ■ ■ **SPECIAL SERVICES** ■ ■ ■

STACKING: Our normal procedure is to pull up a truck as close as safely possible and DUMP the wood. This is our procedure *UNLESS STACKING ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE WHEN THE ORDER IS PLACED*. The stacking fee is based on how close we can safely drive a truck to the stacking area and whether or not stairs are involved. If you need to have your wood stacked, please remember to give us an accurate description of what is involved at the time you place your order so we can send the necessary personnel and equipment.

RESPLITTING: Although our normal 4" to 8" split is perfect for most customers, some people require very small pieces. Our "Postrio split" (named for the famous S.F. restaurant that first requested it) produces a 2" to 4" diameter piece of wood at an additional \$60 per cord. Resplit wood has become very popular because it makes igniting the fire so much easier. Some customers choose to have only a portion of their order resplit and the fee is prorated accordingly.

Please be aware that in the busy winter months, these services are not always available. For those who require stacking or resplitting, it's best to purchase early.

Those looking for the best firewood value will find it during our summer sale. The sale is over August 15th while supplies last!

Please place your order by phone – we are not equipped to take orders by email.

We're easy to reach: Call the yard at (510) 236-4789 during daytime hours or, if there is no answer, call the office at (510) 525-4080 day or night, 7 days a week. Hope to hear from you soon! Your Firewood Dealers, Chris and Bruce Fessenden

Chris & Bruce Fessenden

