

DURABILITY OF TIMBER.



THE Commissioner of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., through the Chief of the Forestry Division, in relation to the treatment of timber in a late bulletin says :

With proper after-treatment of the wood the time of felling seems not to effect its durability. Early winter felling [December] should have the preference, because less fermentable sap is then in the trees, and the timber will season with less care, more slowly and more evenly, and before the temperature is warm enough for fermentation to set in. If the wood is cut "in the sap" it is more liable to fermentation and to the attacks of insects, and more care is necessary in seasoning ; for the rapid seasoning, due to the warm dry atmosphere, produces an outer seasoned coat which envelopes an unseasoned interior liable to decay. When cut in the leaf it is advantageous to let the trees lie full length until the leaves are thoroughly withered (two or three weeks), before cutting to size. With conifers this is good practice, at any season, and if it can be done, all winter-felled trees should be left lying to leaf out in spring, by which most of the sap is worked out and evaporated.

Always remove the bark from felled timber to aid seasoning—but not from the standing tree.

Never allow the log to lie directly on the moist soil.

If winter-felled, shape the timber to size within two weeks after felling and leave it placed on blocks—not upon the soil—in the forest, or if shaped at home place in a dry, airy—not windy—position away from sun and rain.

If dried too rapidly, wood warps and splits, the cracks collect water and the timber is then easily attacked and destroyed by rot.

With large logs, checking may be prevented by coating the ends with some fatty or oily substance mixed with brick dust, or covering with a piece of linen, cloth, or even paper, or by simply shading them to lessen evaporation ; cracks on the sides may be filled in with tow or cotton.

When piling timber, place laths or sticks of uniform size at uniform distances under each log, or post, or tie.

Sufficiently thorough seasoning for most purposes is obtained in twelve to eighteen months, while for special work, according to the size, from two to ten years is required.

The best method of obtaining proper seasoning without costly apparatus in shorter time, is to immerse the prepared timber in water, from one to three weeks, to dissolve the fermentable matter nearest the surface. This is best done by running water—if such is not at hand, a bath may be substituted, the water