

Veneers And Inlays

A forest full of choices awaits you

One of the most enjoyable aspects of veneer work lies in selecting the woods and inlays for a decorative project. As you'll see here, choices abound. Before buying, study up on what's available and what will work best for your project. Here's what you'll likely find.

Note: You can purchase veneer by the square foot at a woodworking specialty store or through a woodworking catalog. (See our Buying Guide, page 14.) Inlays are sold by linear feet or by the piece.

To learn the basics on how to work with veneer and inlays, see page 70. Then, try building the stylish keepsake box on page 76.

• Standard (or raw) veneer

Made when a cutter knife slices across the face of a water-soaked half log,

this so-called flat-cut veneer offers patterns that range from tapering grain to a distinctive cathedral look. (See below.) The raw veneers are then dried and stacked in flitches in numbered order, making them ideal for bookmatching. (This is where sequentially sawn pieces of near-identical grain patterns are placed side by side in a veneering project, such as in a cabinet door or drawer front.)

Thicknesses of standard veneer measure $\frac{1}{28}$ " to $\frac{1}{42}$ ". Sheets come in random widths from 3" to 12", and 3' to 10' long. Costs run from \$.50 to \$2.75 per square foot, depending on species and availability.

• Figured veneer

Flat-cut similarly to standard veneer and also stacked in flitches, only with an eye toward capturing the most fanciful grain patterns, figured veneers are the showiest of the veneer lineup. Woodworkers favor them most for a variety of highly decorative projects, from box tops to drawer fronts.

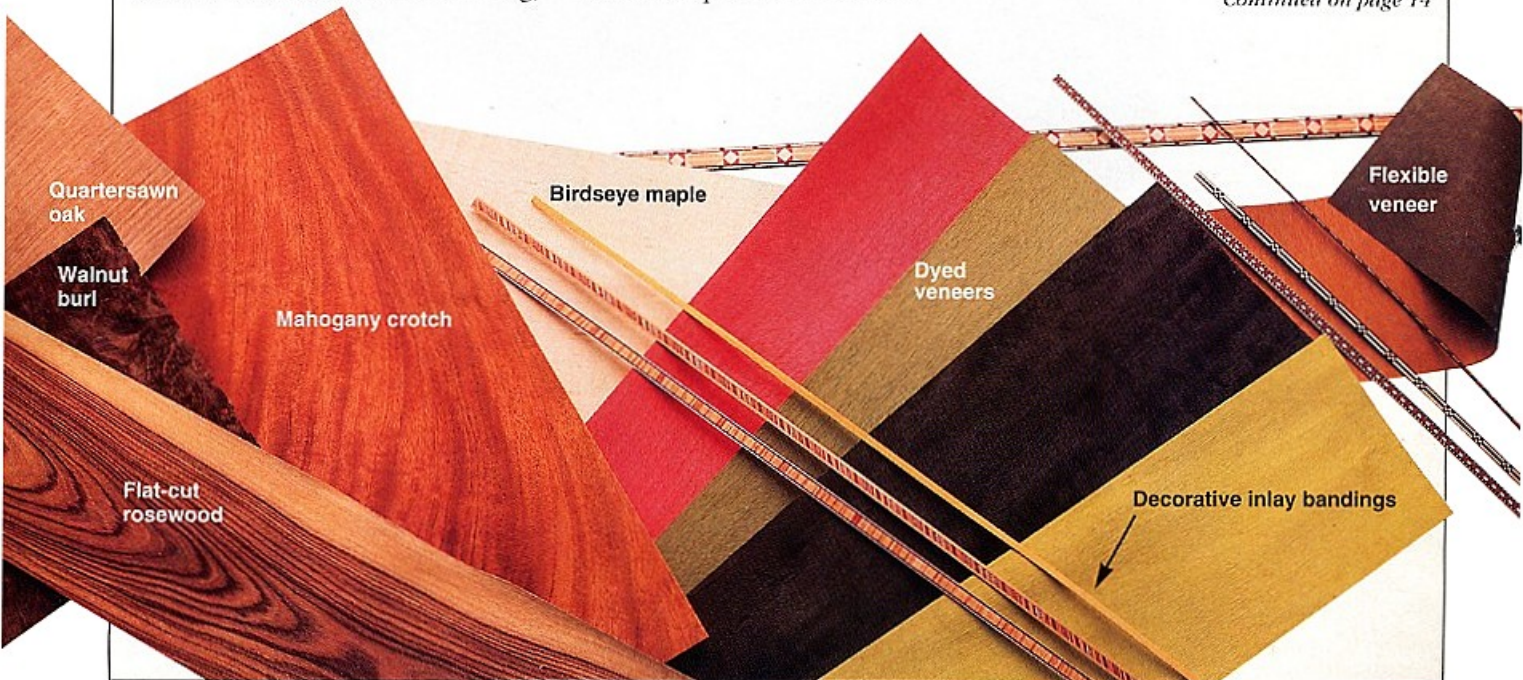
Here, the veneer slices come from tree parts where extreme grain patterns are manifested—growths, roots, and places where trunks split into large branches. From these we get burls, curly, quilted, and crotch woods. Yet, figured veneers tend to be unstable. Often, sheets of figured veneer come wavy, containing cracks and pinholes. That means flattening the figured veneer pieces and doing minor repair work. (See page 71.)

Though figured veneer thickness replicates that of other flat-cut veneer, pieces tend to be smaller, starting around 10×10". Prices are higher than standard veneer, with premium walnut and elm burls costing more than \$4 per square foot. To get the best look and to avoid problems in the veneer, allow for 50 percent waste when ordering.

• Quartersawn veneer

This veneer type comes from logs quartered lengthwise through which

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cuts are made at a right angle to the annular growth rings. The process yields veneers with straight, parallel grain lines and high wood stability. Quartersawn veneers, such as oak, establish a pleasing, consistent look in a design and often can be seen in mission furniture pieces. Sheet sizes match those of standard veneer, with higher prices.

• Dyed Veneer

Made from fine-grain, flat-cut hardwoods, dyed veneer features solid, rich colors penetrating through $\frac{1}{28}$ "-thick sheets. Colors include black, red, orange, green, blue, and yellow. Dimensions are in random widths (between 6" and 10"), and lengths up to 3'. Priced around \$2.75 per square foot, woodworkers rely on dyed black veneers to serve as an ebony look-alike; other dyed veneers help create striking accents and surfaces.

• Other veneers

Because of interest among builders, architects, and cabinetmakers, manufacturers developed still other veneer types with special advantages. These, in general, reduce application time and labor costs while covering larger areas and solving such tricky tasks as veneering curved surfaces.

One such type is *paperback* or *flexible* veneer. The easiest to work with, this veneer costs two to three times more than standard veneer. Sold in 18"- to 48"-wide rolls 8' long, paperback veneer consists of a $\frac{1}{64}$ " layer of smooth, factory-sanded veneer (such as walnut) applied to a 5- or 10-mil paper backing. It can be cut with scissors, though sanding through the thin veneer presents a problem. For this reason, paperback serves better as attractive covering for large tables, cabinet sides, and the like.

One variety of flexible veneer—*peel-and-stick* or *pressure-sensitive*—has an adhesive backing that sticks to



Decorative
inlay faces

a substrate's surface when pressed or ironed in place. Available only in a variety of woods, this veneer requires a clean surface during application; otherwise, failure may result.

Rotary-cut veneer takes shape when logs spin on a large lathe while a sharp horizontal knife peels off long, thin layers of wood. The layers are cut and dried, and later go into the making of plywoods. The final look features repetitive cathedral patterns.

• Decorative inlays

Inlays come in two types, inlay *bandings* and inlay *faces*. The former begins as solid wood laminations made up of two or more contrasting woods. Strips are cut from the laminations, then sanded to $\frac{1}{28}$ " thick. The resulting multicolored strips, measuring $\frac{1}{6}$ " to $1\frac{1}{2}$ " wide, let you spice up projects with pleasing accents and borders. Strips are sold in 3' lengths and priced by the running foot. The wider and more complex, the higher the price.



Inlay faces, by contrast, consist of marquetry pieces, pictures, or designs made from various veneers. Here, you may find images of shells, flowers, and sunbursts—to name a few. Applied as an inlay or overlay (glued onto a wood surface), inlay faces are available for prices ranging from \$3 to \$50 each. More elaborate faces look great on box tops. ♣

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