

HANDMADE, WITH PRIDE, IN MONTANA, U.S.A.

About Our Products

The Logging Process

Our logs are harvested in the Kootenai National Forest via a very selective process. Lodge pole pine is chosen due to its superior strength versus weight ratio and because it is generally straighter, thus easier to work with. Skilled woodsmen select each tree with an attentive eye toward the quality, straightness and size of each specimen. After felling, each piece is hand carried to the road to ensure that it remains undamaged and that its removal does not scar the landscape. As a measure of our commitment to the environment, Montana Woodworks prohibits the use of heavy equipment in the harvest of our logs as the equipment and machinery would damage the surface texture of our products and most importantly, harm the surrounding environment.

Only trees that are “standing dead”, that is, they have died but not fallen, are chosen for our furniture. Conversely, trees that have died and fallen to the ground are not used as they are subject to absorbing moisture and are more likely to dis-color and rot. Some discoloration, however, is likely even in logs prepared from standing dead timber. The most prolific form of this discoloration is varying shades of blue. Sometimes referred to as 'blue pine' these pieces exhibit unique characteristics often sought by customers. Montana Woodworks® proscribes the harvest and use of live trees in our operations as trees that are alive or "green" are subject to warping in the future. Removing standing dead timber, however, greatly reduces the danger of catastrophic firestorms such as those recently witnessed throughout the West. No wildlife habitat is harmed in our operations, as trees large enough to be inhabited are generally too large to be used in our products.

The Preparatory Process

After harvest, the logs are stored until sufficiently dry for use in the building of our furniture. During this drying period, some checking or cracking is likely and expected to occur. This is a natural process; it does not in any way affect the structural integrity of the log or the finished product. The Montana Collection pieces are peeled in a process that removes the outer bark using a very sharp, hand-drawn knife known as a “drawknife”. We choose this method because it gives the finished product an excellent texture and color contrast, whereas mechanical peelers only produce an unattractive, generic texture and little color contrast. During the hand-peeling process, the craftsman also remove some of the inner bark, creating a skip-peeled texture. The Glacier Country Collection pieces are finished in the "Glacier Country" collection style for a unique, one-of-a-kind look reminiscent of the Grand Lodges of the Rockies, circa 1900. First, we remove the outer bark while leaving the inner, cambium layer behind for texture and contrast. Then the finish is completed in an eight-step professional spraying process that applies stain and lacquer for a beautiful, long lasting finish. For those customers who desire a 'cleaner' look, we also offer the option of removing all of the inner bark. This type of peeling is known as "clean peeled" and incurs a slight up-charge to cover the additional labor. Clean peeled items are special order items and must be specified at time of order.

Mortise and Tenon Joinery

Our furniture is assembled using round mortise and tenon joinery. Simple and strong, the mortise and tenon style joint has been used for millennia by woodworkers around the world to join two pieces of wood into a rigid and strong assembly. For the mortise, or the hole, we use a variety of different drill presses and drill bit sizes. For the tenon, or the peg, we use a machine called a 'Log Woofer'. This machine works much like a very large pencil sharpener leaving a tapered end or tenon. Carefully sanding each piece of furniture before, during, and after the assembly process to smooth the furniture's surface and to reduce the risk of gaining splinters is a standard Montana Woodworks® procedure ensuring the highest quality product possible. During the assembly process, we apply a powerful adhesive into the mortise, or the hole, before joining the two pieces. After joining the two pieces, we use wood screws or staples to hold the two pieces firmly together until the adhesive sets. This drying period takes approximately twenty-four hours.

Finishing

After assembly, the items are again sanded and carefully re-inspected. Following the comprehensive inspection, the items are packaged to prevent dust collection and moved into inventory. If ordered by the customer, we finish the item with a clear lacquer or stain and lacquer if ordered in the Homestead Collection or Glacier Country Collection style. For those who purchase Ready to Finish items, we recommend protecting the original color and texture of your rustic log furniture with a lacquer or water based varnish finish. If left unfinished, the wood will yellow over time. Most hardware stores and do-it-yourself warehouses sell small amounts of lacquer or water-based varnish and the tools necessary to complete the task. We highly recommend the application of three coats of clear lacquer or water based varnish finish to each piece of new Montana Woodworks® furniture; doing so will protect the color and the beauty of the wood for many years. Environmental responsibility is more than just a phrase at Montana Woodworks®. We are truly dedicated to ensuring the sustainability of nature's finest treasures for future generations to use and enjoy.

All Montana Woodworks® Products Carry a 20-Year Limited Warranty