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Demand for sustainable wood grows in housing

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Wooden furniture, doors and windows and other wood interior designs are commonplace in Indian homes and businesses. The natural ambience of wood products makes it a premier choice in our homes, workplaces and community facilities. As building technologies evolve, this material is increasingly in demand nowadays.

Wood costs less, economically and environmentally and it's one of the most beautiful, versatile, durable and renewable raw materials available. Its use is found not only in interior and exterior applications but also for structural uses. The natural magnificence of wood is unparalleled which adds to the charm and warmth of any space. There is now a growing realisation among consumers about wood being a reliable and eco-friendly resource.

This realisation has promoted the annual celebration of World Wood Day on March 21. The day is celebrated to remind people of the true value of wood and raise awareness about the important role wood plays in a sustainable world through biodiversity and forest conservation. The unique celebration also recaps the importance of true value of wood and its responsible use.

However, this then leads to the question – **"Will cutting down trees for wood harm the environment?"** As much as India needs to conserve its forests, it still needs wood to satisfy the demand of its growing economy. The answer lies in procuring certified, sustainable wood products. One such example is wood products from British Columbia, Canada who are the world leaders in sustainable forest management.
There are several other reasons why wood remains the natural choice.

- Wood is a truly renewable resource that is grown by the sun that can last for generations
- Wood enhances our surroundings by bringing warmth, spirituality, and connection to Mother Nature into our living spaces
- Improves acoustic performance of a space and betters indoor air quality
- It enables us to maintain traditional looks, or create modern sleek designs
- Wood mitigates the effects of climate change by taking carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in its cells throughout its life
- Life cycle analysis and scientific studies have shown that using renewable resources such as sustainable wood helps the environment over the long term when compared to other materials, and compared to wood that is not sourced from sustainably managed forests.

Wood showcases the beauty of nature, radiates warmth and adds value. As a natural material, it brings inherent feelings of being connected to the environment and brightens any space. The physical and working properties of sustainable wood allow unmatched options for designing and finishing. Its varied applications include furniture, wall and ceiling panelling, doors, windows and other millwork. But the value of using sustainable wood just doesn't stop at being aesthetic.

A recent study conducted by the University of British Columbia and FPInnovations used an approach known as 'evidence based design 'to study an occupant's response in a healthcare facility in a building made of wood. The study showed that the visual presence of wood lowered the occupant's sympathetic nervous system (SNS), thereby reducing stress and contributing to a speedy recovery. Wood products and finishes can also contribute to the control of air-borne contaminants as they are durable, easily maintained, dust-free after installation and emit few, if any, harmful vapours.

Sustainable wood products are readily available for outdoor applications such as exterior trim, siding, roofing, decking, fencing and garden accessories of all kinds. Wood used for trim, decks and fences can be installed in its natural state, or be stained, primed or painted.

Wood is far more than a traditional building product: its beauty, adaptability and design flexibility make it suitable for a wide range of building types and applications. Innovative new technologies and building systems have enabled longer wood spans, taller walls and higher buildings, contributing to a wider range of wood construction system solutions and building opportunities.

With the load strength and span-width capabilities of new engineered wood products, and wood's lighter weight compared to concrete or masonry, wood is enabling architects to design dramatic vaulted ceilings, long span bridges, and buildings that rise six-storeys and higher. Cross laminated timber (CLT), parallel strand lumber (PSL), glued laminated timber (glulam) and prefabricated paneling systems are among the products contributing to a wider range of wood buildings.

What brings us to the end of the article is to ask ourselves if we are doing our bit in conserving and saving our natural resources and partnering with sustainable living for a lifetime and more!

Author's Note: Peter Bradfield is the Technical Advisor of Forestry Innovation Consulting India, Canadian (B.C.) Wood Products. With over 40 years of experience in the wood & woodworking industry internationally, Peter leads FII India's educational and direct outreach activities to a wide range of audiences.