

Stay toasty all winter AND keep your trees healthy

By: Elizabeth Barnes, barne175@purdue.edu



The image shows a pile of short cut logs in a field. The logs take up most of the foreground. There is a red tractor and the edge of a fall forest in the background. Image taken by Shawn Harquail.

Now that fall has arrived many people have begun collecting next year's firewood and clearing their yards of brush and downed trees. This can be a great way to both tidy up your property and save some money but there are a few pitfalls to avoid. Already dead trees or dropped limbs can make easy pickings for firewood but often have pests or pathogens hidden inside. There [140+ pests and pathogens](#) like spotted lanternfly, Asian longhorned beetle, and thousand cankers disease that can be spread in dead wood. Even trees that seem healthy may be in the early stages of infestation or infection. Bringing this wood back to your home, cabin, or favorite campground risks exposing healthy trees to deadly threats. However, there are easy ways to collect your own wood without these risks.

Where to Collect

Collect your firewood within 30 miles of where you plan to use it. Generally trees inside of this radius are exposed to the same types of pests and pathogens so there is a lower risk of spreading something new. If you move this wood too far (more than 30 miles) you risk moving a pest or pathogen to a new area where

they can attack and kill new trees. By not moving wood far from where it is collected you can prevent the spread of these pests to new, un-infested areas.

What to do with it

Have more brush or cut wood than you know what to do with? Here are few ideas!

- Leave it for wildlife. Many animals use fallen limbs and brush for shelter and food. Leaving your wood on the ground or in sturdy piles can give them places to hide over the cold winter.
- Burn it in fire pits, bonfires, or fireplaces. Be sure to follow local regulations and [burn carefully](#).
- Chip it for mulch and use for landscaping.
- Use it for posts or garden stakes.
- Give it to nearby neighbors.
- Compost it. Some landfills and composting sites allow for wood disposal. Be sure that wherever you bring the wood is within 30 miles of where you collect it.

What NOT to do:

- Move more than 30 miles for any purpose.
- Leave for free on the side of the road. You can't be sure who will pick it up and how far they'll move it!

Where to Store it

Store your firewood away from your home, outdoors, off the ground, and covered. Piles of firewood may attract animals and insects looking for food and shelter. Most of [these animals and insects](#) are no more than mild nuisances in homes but can still be unpleasant to deal with. Storing firewood away from your home reduces the chance that you'll have to deal with these unwelcome guests. To learn more about firewood storage check out [this helpful guide](#).

Additional credit for this article goes to Tess Hoffman.

It is the policy of the Purdue University that all persons have equal opportunity and access to its educational programs, services, activities, and facilities without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, disability or status as a veteran. Purdue is an Affirmative Action Institution. This material may be available in alternative formats. 1-888-EXT-INFO Disclaimer: Reference to products in this publication is not intended to be an endorsement to the exclusion of others which may have similar uses. Any person using products listed in this publication assumes full responsibility for their use in accordance with current directions of the manufacturer.

Purdue Landscape Report © Purdue University - www.purduelandscape.org