

The Case For Ripping Hardwood Lumber



By Joe Zbicki
American Lumber Company

INTRODUCTION

The act of ripping hardwood lumber is not new. Manufacturers have been ripping hardwood lumber as part of converting random width hardwood lumber into usable parts for years. Whether it is with a simple table saw or using a more advanced gang rip saw, ripping lumber is a standard industry practice.

What might not be as common is replacing the ordering of random width hardwood lumber with specific hardwood lumber rips designed specifically for your company's needs.

Industry grading rules alone, which have served us well for years, do not necessarily measure the true value of a board to all manufacturers today. Depending on what you are trying to produce, (cabinets, flooring, mouldings, furniture, etc.), the standard FAS/1F and Common grades leave manufacturers with limited options to control lumber costs.

Many times it is the placement of defects and the continuous lengths of clear fiber in a board, which can be found across many grade levels, that determines the overall board value. So instead of purchasing random width lumber in the traditional grade categories, we believe manufacturers can benefit more from ordering exact widths with the required spacing and placement of defects that would suit their product needs. In other words, have your supplier rip the boards to your specs to maximize the value of each board specifically for you!



RIPPED HARDWOOD LUMBER OPTIONS

Ripped hardwood lumber categories have evolved in several different options or grades.

SLR1E –Straight Line Ripped One Edge. One full length of the board is completely edged so one side is straight and perpendicular. This is traditionally provided as a product of the grade.

SLR2E – Straight Line Ripped Two Edges. Both edges of the board are ripped providing the blank required with two fence-able edges to work from. This is traditionally provided as a product of the grade.

American Lumber's Custom Two Edged Rips Options

- **C1F2E** – Clear one face and two edges. A sound defect on back face not to exceed 1”.
- **Single Defect** – A SLR2E product that can have only one defect in the board.
- **70% Clear** – A SLR2E product that can have multiple sound or unsound defects anywhere in the piece as long as 70% of the board produces clear four face cuts with a minimum size cut of 12”.
- **50% Clear** – A SLR2E product that can have multiple defects anywhere in the piece as long as 50% of the board produces clear four face cuts with a minimum size cut of 12”.
- **Customer Specific Rip Grade** – When one of the options above does not suit the situation companies can utilize the **American Lumber Custom Lumber Solution** process to co-create a ripped hardwood lumber solution specifically designed for their manufacturing process. Through an onsite visit and a formalized 5 step development process we can help you develop exactly what you need.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN ORDERING HARDWOOD RIPS

When working with manufacturers, we recommend the following:

Know your real current lumber yields – Having a true knowledge of your lumber yields can be a complicated process. Many times people only consider the yield reports provided by their saws scanning technologies. This typically does not take into consideration the complete fiber available on the boards. We recommend incorporating a comprehensive yield review which includes measuring the full lumber input into production and comparing it to the full fiber available after ripping in your yield analysis.

Many times we find customers are realizing less than an 80% yield when utilizing random width hardwood lumber even though their machinery indicates something higher.

Think clear lengths instead of lumber grade

- The better a company can match the lumber they purchase with the dimensions of clear lengths they need to produce their product, the lower their production costs become. Furthermore, mixing and matching different types and sizes of ripped hardwood lumber products to best suit your needs is a great way to decrease operating costs. Be ready to articulate your need in terms of clear lengths and widths required instead of lumber grade to maximize the benefit.



Determine the board characteristics you must have - If it is number of cuts per board, the length of continuous clears, or something different, know exactly what you need to improve production. By making this a characteristic of each board you will be better able to step out from the industry grading parameters and maximize the true board value.

Evaluate existing labor capabilities and bottlenecks – Be aware of any excessive lumber handling efforts, resorting practices, or need for additional employees in the warehouse or manufacturing process. All could be clues to a possible environment where ripped hardwoods could be a benefit. By utilizing lumber that is better prepared for your production you can redeploy employees to work on more valuable tasks, leverage their skills better internally, or even use their time to expand operations into different venues.

Understand your existing ripping capabilities – If your existing ripping capabilities are based off of an older machine, or if you are ripping large volumes of lumber with a standard table saw, ordering in ripped hardwood lumber from the mill could be a potential benefit.

Prepare to measure component cost certainty - One of the major benefits of utilizing more ripped lumber in your production process is the improvement of quantifying the cost to produce parts. The sheer variable nature of using random width boards creates a large variation in component production costs across the different loads of lumber used. By utilizing ripped lumber you can reduce the amount of raw material variation and improve cost certainty. This should be an ongoing category of measurement and evaluation.

Analyze the impact on freight costs – For those with freight costs about \$150/m or for destinations far from the lumber source, maximizing the usable lumber per shipment becomes even more of a concern. Be cognizant of the costs you incur for shipping random lumber that becomes unusable lumber. Unusable lumber can be things such as waste and left over dimensional parts. If you encounter too much of this for your liking, ripped lumber could be a significant value for you.



SUMMARY

The production and use of ripped hardwood lumber has evolved significantly in the past few years. If you regularly utilize specific widths for your product production you might benefit from ordering ripped hardwood lumber directly from your supplier. We would be happy to help you evaluate what would be best for you. Contact us today to discuss how ripped-to-width hardwood lumber can help your business!

How to contact us



P.O. Box 9001

Hamburg, New York 14075

814-438-7888

inquiry@alumber.com

www.alumber.com

No part of this document, in whole or in part, may be reproduced or reused without the prior written permission of American Lumber Company. The information in this document is provided for informational purposes only.