

PRSTD STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Ithaca NY
Permit No. 780



Volume 16 Number 4 April 2002
P.O. Box 669, Winthrop, WA 98862
www.bearcreeklumber.com

In This Issue

Internet Strategies

Customer Response

Industry News

Environment At Risk

Monthly Specials For April



Address Service Requested

CCA Treated Lumber Phased Out: Dimensional Yellow Cedar An Excellent Alternative

Manufacturers of arsenic-treated wood (commonly used in backyard decks and children's play equipment, and sold at home-improvement stores and lumber yards) have agreed to phase out the product for residential use by the end of 2003, the Environmental Protection Agency announced in February. Arsenic is a known human carcinogen, and the EPA is conducting a study to determine whether children who repeatedly come in contact with the preservative — known as chromated copper arsenate or CCA — face a higher risk of cancer of the lungs, bladder, or skin, as some environmental and consumer groups contend.

Alaskan yellow cedar is an excellent alternative for CCA treated material. Its natural phenol properties make it completely rot resistant, but at the same time safe for use by all age groups. Bear Creek Lumber has all sizes and dimensions of cedar available in various grades, some of which are featured on the back of this newsletter. Call (800) 597-7191 for more information about these and other naturally rot resistant products.

Kestrels and Bats Get New Homes From Bear Creek Lumber



The American kestrel is a robin-sized falcon. It is rust-colored, with a sharp, hooked bill. Although widely distributed throughout the United States, they prefer savanna-like areas with few trees or farmsteads, woodland borders, city parks, and suburban areas.

Bats are a species in alarming decline. Myths and misunderstandings about bats, as well as a loss of habitat have led to much of their population loss. Bats are primary predators of night-flying insects, and play a vital role in the balance of nature. A single little brown myotis bat can catch hundreds of mosquitoes in an hour. A colony of big brown bats can reduce a farm's infestation of up to 33 million rootworms each summer.

Bear Creek Lumber was asked to donate to a local Eagle scout project that would create nesting boxes for both these creatures. The boxes are small, requiring limited amounts of lumber. Built with 1 x 6 or 1 x 10, the houses are easily assembled, and can be placed throughout a community. Bear Creek Lumber was happy to oblige. The company has always been dedicated to conservation, and has donated materials for bird and bat projects in the past. If you would like to know more, we will have bat nursery plans online, as well as the information for kestrel nesting boxes. It's a worthy project for any handyman (or woman) with some scrap leftover from a building project. Check it out @ www.bearcreeklumber.com under Corporate Sponsorship.



Customer Response



I moved and rebuilt two log houses in 1996. We bought the hand split wood cedar roof shakes from Bear Creek. They were very good quality; service was good and so was delivery. The log house was originally built in 1795, a very old building for this part of Ohio.

James Casto
Canal Winchester, OH

Aloha Cloud, Ela and All of Bear Creek Lumber, Dealing with Bear Creek has always been a pleasure. We have never had a phone conversation that wasn't both warm, and informative. Materials we have received have always been packed well and obviously care, and pride have been built in to every phase of the order. It is a reflection of the two of you which I hope engenders pride. We don't feel like customers but rather like friends looking for lumber. Thank you all, aloha,
Bob Heitz and Toni Lowe
Captain Cook, HI

An experience that could have been a disaster turned out to be excellent. Thanks, Mark (Buck)!!
David Cersousky
Austin TX

I can't say enough about how cooperative and helpful your salesman Merle Kirkley was. My husband was out fishing, and Merle answered all my questions!! Keep him!
Marie Murray
Sitka AK

Every Builder Needs an Internet Strategy

American users of the Internet now spend 9.8 hours a week online, according to a study by UCLA. A year ago, the number was 9.4 hours. The study also found television viewing has gone down, as Internet usage has climbed.

The ever changing Internet is now making things possible that builder couldn't have imagined two years ago. Job supervisors can use cell phones to update schedules stored on a remote computer. Daily checking balances can be dialed in from anywhere in the world. Having an Internet strategy has become as crucial to a growing business, as a blue print is to building a house. Though the specifics will be different in every case, each company needs to address certain issues.

The first step is developing a quality web site. Your web site should make visitors want to buy your product or services. Your home page should not only be easy to download but you also need a very clear and concise menu. The best web sites are often the simplest. Ones that download fast, and are easy for the potential customer to navigate through with little hassle or waiting time, are the best.

With the entire building process becoming web enabled, customer information needs to move seamlessly from one step to the next. The selections stored in the customer's Web site folder need to show up on the closing documents. Effective information that can be easily downloaded, and printed by the potential customer can include the lot, a model, structural options, floor plan modifications, interior options and a material list. These should integrate with purchasing programs and scheduling systems and everything should tie back with the accounting system.

Building a house requires constant communication between several players. A company Internet lets you keep all employees up to date on all projects. It is one thing to have an Internet site set up but it is an entirely different art to constantly be improving and upgrading your system. The more easily your page operates, the less stress you will find other members of your company dealing with.



Industry News

Four in ten sawmills have closed in the western United States since 1992.

Despite the losses, production is greater than it was in 1995. A total of 278 sawmills produced 17.1 billion board feet of lumber in 2000, compared to 1995, when 375 mills manufactured 15.3 billion board feet of product. This translates to 25% fewer sawmills producing 12% more lumber. Better efficiency and larger plants have made the difference. Framing lumber prices were the lowest since 1992, with a composite value of \$312 during 2001. The price was \$323 in 2000 and \$287 in 1992.

Canadian housing hit a ten-year high in 2001, with 162,733 units started.

Housing starts were due to favorable immigration and attractive mortgage rates, accounting for a 7% overall rise. **Shake and shingle producers expect tight fiber supplies in 2002** because of shortages of raw materials. Massive logging cutbacks in Western Canada this fall, associated with preliminary countervailing and anti-dumping duties on cedar products shipped into the US, have constricted supplies, causing many mills to shutdown, some permanently. Prices are expected to climb in the spring months, especially if the tariff situation isn't resolved.

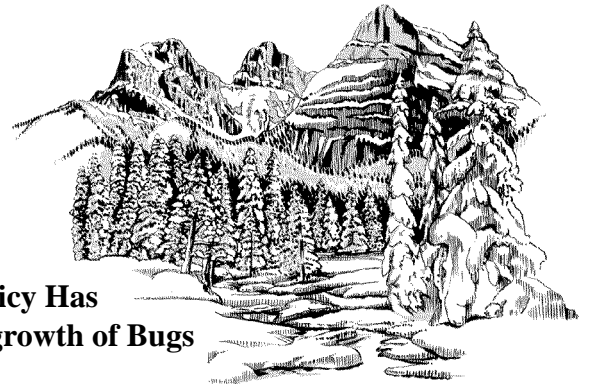
Timely completion is more important to most home buyers than the quality of workmanship, according to a study by J.D. Power and Associates. Of the nine factors examined, home readiness was second only to customer service.

Interest rates for 30-year mortgages went down in February as housing starts shot up in January, further evidence that the construction industry has got more life left in it. Realtor associations predict a strong housing year.

Canadians and Americans have been hopeful that an agreement on equalizing lumber values between the countries is on the horizon. Canadians are leaning towards imposing an export tax on their products as well as agreeing to reforms in their provincial timber policies. Both sides are anxious to move on.

Environment At Risk:

Years of Shady Fire Policy Has Given Way to An Overgrowth of Bugs



A century of misguided fire policy has upset the balance in the forest of Eastern Washington and throughout the West, making them vulnerable to devastating infestations. The Western Spruce bud worm is eating its way through the thousands of acres of Douglas fir with no natural predator in site. Simply zapping the bugs isn't possible and the only means of stopping them will put an endangered species at risk. The Northern Spotted Owl live in the infected trees along with the bugs. Experts say a real solution will require a new approach to forest and fires.

Bugs are a symptom of how the forests has changed, says Department of Natural Resources regional manager Bill Boyum. In many places, the trees are green, mostly budworm-free. But they are the wrong kind of trees, Boyum explains, and there are too many of them. A century ago, the forest east of Yakima was about 70 percent Ponderosa pine and 30 percent Douglas fir. Now the order is reversed. That is significant because bud worms don't eat Ponderosa pine.

Ponderosa pines need fire. Before the modern policy of fire suppression, a ground fire would burn throughout Eastern Washington forest about once a decade. These ground fires cleared underbrush, giving pines room to grow. With the fire resistant bark, the mature pines thrived. Now Douglas Fir, which tolerate shade better than pines, have taken advantage of the shady situation and began to thrive.

In the past bud worm breakouts have lasted 7-10 years with 40-60 year breaks but the current bud worms have been feasting for 20 years with no sign of slowing down. Bud worms infested 500,000 acres of Washington forest last year and could damage 800,000 acres this year.

The only solution to stopping the bugs is by attacking the forest in a massive harvest of infected trees. The problem with the solution is that it entails attacking spotted owl habitat.

"These birds are going to go extinct if we don't provide habitat for them, but we have to realize this is a very unnatural habitat," says state entomologist Karen Ripley. "It's a powder keg." Since the spotted owl is on the National Endangered species list, the foresters have their hands tied. A solution for one problem spells disaster for another.



For the birds...

A new website has been developed by the Weyerhaeuser Company for bird lovers and researchers. The site helps identify the habitat of birds throughout Canada.

www.ibacanada.com/online.html includes thousands of pieces of data based on surveys. It is considered the most extensive survey of bird habitat available anywhere on the earth.



Bear Creek Lumber
P.O. Box 669 Winthrop, WA 98862
(509) 997-3110 fax (509) 997-2040
www.bearcreeklumber.com
Sage Bannick, feature writer
Ela Bannick, TIMBERLINE Editor