There are many myths associated with using trees grown in an urban setting for woodworking. Often times people believe urban trees contain foreign objects, are of low quality, or that no one wants them for processing into lumber. While some of these myths can be accurate in certain scenarios, the trees in urban areas are well cared for and offer a great source of quality lumber. This document explores different types of lumber commonly found in urban settings, and some of their basic uses. More information about urban lumber and the location of sawmills in Iowa can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/urbanwood.

## Ash
**Uses:** Furniture; handles for tools or shovels; boxes; baseball bats; cooperage (barrels & casks); boat oars; ladders; chairs.  
**Workability:** Easy to work; good nail & screw holding properties; glues & finishes well; excellent steam bending properties.

## Eastern Redcedar
**Uses:** Chest linings; interior woodwork; souvenir novelties; buckets; shingles; posts & poles.  
**Workability:** Easy to work; carves & whittles well.

## Black Cherry
**Uses:** Cabinetry; furniture; tool handles; novelties; musical instruments; woodenware.  
**Workability:** Easy to work; machine & turn; holds screws & glue well; finishes very well; turns darker with age.

## Black Locust
**Uses:** Fence posts; handles; boxes; crates; woodenware; poles; novelties; natural decay resistance.  
**Workability:** Difficult to work with hand tools; machines well; very smooth finish; high polish; hard to nail.

## Butternut
**Uses:** Furniture; interior trim; paneling and carving; traditionally- church altars.  
**Workability:** Easy to work with sharp cutting edge; finishes well.

## Elm
**Uses:** Cooperage stays; hoops; baskets; shipbuilding; boxes; crates; flooring; veneers; toys; woodenware; furniture.  
**Workability:** Difficult to split; excellent bending properties; hard to polish; sawn surfaces can be “woolly”; dulls tools; nails, screws and finishes well.

## Hackberry
**Uses:** Woodworking; carving; farm implements; boxes; crates  
**Workability:** Easy to work; stain and finish.
Hard Maple (Sugar Maple or Black Maple)
Uses: Furniture; paneling & cabinetry; flooring; wood with figure is prized for decorative cabinetry & musical instruments; turning (table legs, other round things)
Workability: Machines & finishes well; good glue, nail & screw holding properties; prone to splitting; excellent bending properties.

Hickories
Uses: Best wood for handles- axes; hammers; ladder rungs; golf clubs; agricultural parts; archery bows. Traditionally used for spokes, wheel rims and buggy shafts.
Workability: Excellent workability with sharp tools; prone to split; finishes very smoothly; excellent bending properties.

Honey Locust
Uses: Home woodworking projects, fence posts and rails, upholstery frame stock, pallets and blocking
Workability: Machines well; hard wood similar to oaks

Kentucky Coffeetree
Uses: Specialty wood for woodworkers and custom shops, railroad ties, fence posts and rails, pallets
Workability: Machines well, relatively hard, porous wood, comparable to oaks

Red Oaks
Uses: Cabinetry; furniture; veneer, flooring; millwork (trim, doors & crown molding); pallets
Workability: Machines well; can be steam bent

Sycamore
Uses: Butcher blocks; boxes; crates; truck slats; slack cooperage; furniture; fruit & vegetable baskets; interior finish; woodenware
Workability: Turns with ease; finishes smooth with sharp tools, nails, screws & glues well.

Walnut
Uses: Cabinetry; gunstocks; furniture; novelties; crown molding.
Workability: Easy to work; good nail & screw holding properties; finishes well with filling.

White Oaks
Uses: Fine cabinetry; millwork (trim, doors & crown molding); flooring; heavy construction- mats; bridges; liquor barrels & other containers; natural decay resistance.
Workability: Machines well; tannic acid causes discoloration so avoid metals containing iron fasteners.

Sources:
Ohio State University Extension, Using Local Woodlot Lumber, https://ohioline.osu.edu/fact-sheet/F-9-03
Purdue University Extension: Wood from Midwestern Trees, FNR-270