WOOD GLOSSARY

**bearclaw**: a pattern visible in some spruces that crosses the grain and looks almost as if a bear clawed the tree; usually increases cross-grain stiffness.

**bird’s eye**: small circular or elliptical areas resembling bird’s eyes on the tangential surface of the wood, formed by indented fibers.

**bookmatched**: guitar tops and backs created when a single board is cut into two pieces, opened like a book, and joined to show symmetrical matching of the grain.

**chatoyance**: a change in light reflection or luster across the surface of the wood, typically described as figure, and by the patterns the light reflection creates.

**chevron**: an arrowed pattern, or inverted V pattern, typically created by the book matching of a set of wood.

**curly**: a figure pattern that looks like a curl across the surface of the wood.

**deflection**: a method for measuring stiffness.

**density**: the specific weight of a wood per unit volume.

**fiddle back**: a figure pattern occurring on the quarter-sawn face of wood, similar to the pattern of tiger’s stripes.

**figure roll**: referring to the light play, or chatoyance, as one looks across the surface of the wood.

**figure**: any distinctive wood grain pattern.

**figured**: a variation in grain pattern that is visually seen as a change in reflectance, or other dramatic character on the surface of the wood.

**flamed**: a type of figure in wood, named for a broad curl that forms a flame pattern.

**flat sawn**: wood that has been cut in an orientation where the growth rings form an angle less than 45 degrees to the wood surface. Also referred to as tangential cut.

**flex test**: a test designed to measure the amount of flexibility in a piece of wood.

**flexibility**: referring to the resistance to, or ease of, bending.

**grain direction**: the direction of the long axes of the dominant longitudinal cells or fibers in a piece of wood.
Grain pattern (narrow, medium, etc): the visible dark and light lines; a record of the contrast between summer and winter growth.

Grain runout: the angle by which the grain of a piece of wood varies from its natural growth direction; usually a sign of lower quality, lower strength, and lower stiffness.

Hardness: resistance to denting.

Medullary ray: Pith rays radiating outward in every direction from the heart of the stem to the bark. The medullary ray shows strongest on the vertical-grain face of a board.

Moon wood (spruce): a name for spruce that was harvested and handled according to Old-World traditions from the Alps region of Europe. The tradition is based on harvesting at specific times dictated by the lunar calendar.

Natural resonant frequency: the note at which any material vibrates when struck, bowed or otherwise excited to emit sound.

Quarter sawn: wood that has been cut in an orientation where the growth rings form a 90-degree angle (or nearly 90 degrees) to the wood surface. Also referred to as vertical grain or radial cut.

Quilted: woods that have a figure similar to puckered cloth; occurs most frequently in maple, and sometimes in mahogany and other woods.

Rescued: see salvaged.

Ribbon grain: mahogany or other hardwood with parallel bands of alternating grain runout.

Rift sawn: wood that has been cut in an orientation where the growth rings form an angle of 45 degrees to the wood surface.

Salvaged: when a log is rescued, either from being processed into an inferior product, or from the forest floor, where it might otherwise degrade.

Sausage quilt: a type of figure that contains shapes similar to long, tubular bubbles.

Sinker: a log that was salvaged from the bottom of a water source; typically the wood leeches minerals from the water, producing a beautiful variegation of color with dramatic contrast.

Stiffness: refers to a wood’s resistance to flexing.

Sustainable: a system that maintains its own viability by using techniques that allow for continual reuse; conserving an ecological balance by avoiding depletion of natural resources.