

# 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.