

Iroko *Chlorophora excelsa* from W. Africa

Stable, solid timber which dramatically changes colour. Newly machined wood is very light with a distinctive buttery sheen which after several months changes to dark chestnut brown. Naturally oily and sometimes known as 'poor man's teak' it is none the less probably the best timber for kitchen worktops.

Mahogany *Swietenia macrophylla* from W. Africa

Reddish hardwood which matures to a rich dark colour in a few months. It has a fine texture which finishes to a very smooth surface. Grows to great heights so long lengths are obtainable.

Maple *Acer saccharum* from America and

Acer pseudoplatanus (sycamore) from Europe

Traditionally used for work surfaces and end-grain butchers' blocks because of its dense, hard surface with a fine texture and even, creamy, pink-tinged colour. The European variety is less dense and heavy but has long been used for kitchen and dairy worktops.

Oak *Quercus alba* from England, France and N. America

Extremely strong and durable, mid-brown in colour with some grain figure with a few small flecks of red and white and occasionally small clean knots in long lengths. It has a high tannin content which can be drawn out and make dark stains if exposed to moisture, so care must be taken to keep it well oiled in wet areas.

Teak *Tectona grandis* from Burma

Now sadly an endangered species and so difficult and very expensive to obtain. It is also not popular with fabricators as it is grown in gritty soil which enters the timber and can ruin machine tools. It also contains a glutinous substance which makes it hard to work.

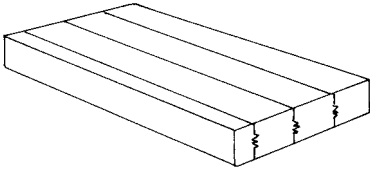
Walnut *Juglans nigra* from N. America

A quality timber with a blue-grey patina producing a dark finish when oiled. It is tough and finishes to a very high standard.

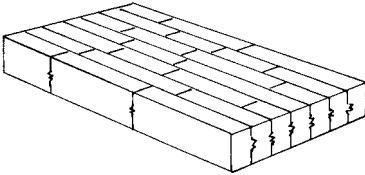
Construction

The best quality hardwood worktops are made up of *staves*, i.e. planks which vary in width from about 90 to 130 mm, depending upon species. They are held together with a finger joint and glued with water-resistant polyurethane adhesive.

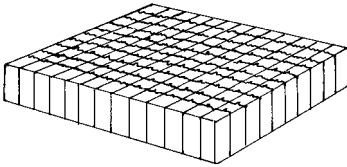
maximum length: about 3.6 m
thickness: 30, 40 and 60 mm



Top quality hardwood worktop made up of continuous staves 90–130 mm wide tongued and glued or finger jointed together



Standard hardwood worktop made up of 40 mm wide staves of various lengths



Endgrain worktop made up of staves glued together vertically in one direction and tongued and grooved in the other

Considerably cheaper hardwood worktops are made up of solid hardwood pieces 40 mm wide, comb-jointed and fixed with radio-frequency glue. As a result, this type of worktop will have a more varied colour and grain pattern than worktops made with continuous staves.

maximum length: 4.2 m
thickness: 27 and 40 mm

End grain worktops are made up of staves glued vertically with tongued and glued joints in one direction and butt joints in the other.