Digest 8-10 Layout:D SigNov03-1-8,41-48 7/22/10 9:10 AM Page 10

Cypress wins points for green building projects

IT'S NO WONDER southern cypress—known for its natural beauty and durability—is a favorite in green building projects. From interior ceilings to exterior siding, cypress performs.

"Not only does it provide a beautiful appearance, but its resistance to rot and acceptance of a wide range of finishes are just as attractive," says Nancy Tuck, vice president of finance at Gates Custom Milling, Gatesville, N.C., and past president of the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association.

Gates Custom recently supplied cypress siding for the Merchants Millpond Visitor Center in Gatesville. Located in Millpond State Park, the new 7,500-sq. ft. welcome center was designed by architect Frank Harmon, who prefers to specify locally sourced wood.

HURRICANE-DOWNED cypress from New Orleans' Botanical Park was used to construct a modular pavilion that was built for garden volunteers, but is also used for meetings, seminars, and parties. (*Photo by Mike McKay, Lexington, Ky.)*

CYPRESS reclaimed from the nearby Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge was milled into siding for the Merchant Millpond Visitor Center, Gatesville, N.C. (*Photo by Richard Leo Johnson, Atlantic Archives Inc., Savannah, Ga.)*

Although the architect initially specified Atlantic white cedar for the exterior of the center, Tuck suggested using cypress—in this case, logs salvaged from the nearby Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge and milled into siding by Gates.

"Cypress supplied the warm, clean look he wanted and stands up to the elements naturally," says Tuck. Along with locally sourced wood, the building also includes recycled-steel structural members, concrete block with high fly-ash content, and a metal roof with solar reflectivity that reduces heat gain—which will probably add up to LEED Gold certification.

At Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, Orange, Tx., hurricane-downed cypress from the property and cypress salvaged from rivers

Digest 8-10 Layout:D SigNov03-1-8,41-48 7/22/10 2:00 PM Page 11

in nearby Louisiana was used to construct new buildings, walkways, viewing structures, and outdoor furniture. The project earned LEED Platinum certification and was named one of the Top Ten Green Projects of 2009 by the American Institute of Architects.

"We often use cypress, especially where we need a highly decay- and infestation-resistant material that can stand up to the elements," said Bob Harris, LakeFlato Architects, San Antonio, Tx. "It's a sustainable material that adds lasting beauty that holds up over the long haul."

After Hurricane Katrina severely damaged New Orleans' Botanical Park and uprooted many old cypress trees, director Paul Soniat invited local mills to collect the wood. Frank Vallot, owner of Acadia Hardwoods, Ponchatoula, La., accepted the invitation and then donated cypress lumber for a new volunteer's pavilion.

Soniat's nephew, architect Mike McKay, who practices in Lexington, Ky., and teaches at the University of Kentucky's College of Design, was the designer. The open-air structure has a storage area for gardening tools and supplies, a potting shed, and a meeting area for meetings and seminars.

"People want to have parties and lectures in it," says McKay. "It went from this little potting shed into a really beautiful pavilion that people can use for other things."

NEW RESIDENTIAL COMPLEX at Rice University, Houston, Tx., where vertical-grain cypress wraps the first-floor exterior, extends as paneling into an interior entry, and then up a stairway to the second floor. Window trim is also cypress. (*Photo by Rice University*)

Custom Lumber Manufacturing, Dothan, Al., recently supplied vertical-grain cypress for a new residential complex at Rice University, Houston, Tx., at the request of architect Sir Michael Hopkins.

"He liked the look of vertical grain cypress—had seen it at another project we supplied in Long Island, N.Y.," says Chuck Harris, Custom's president. "We were tracked down because he wanted the same look."

According to Harris, cypress siding wraps the first-floor exterior, extends as paneling into an interior entry, and then up a stairway to the second floor. He said that the window trim was also constructed of vertical-grain cypress.

Harris says that Custom recently supplied a second order of cypress for the university and has received an inquiry for a third shipment. "As less western red cedar and redwood becomes available, cypress seems to take the place of these woods," he says. "People want the beauty of cypress."

Out west, at the Jackson Hole Airport in Grand Teton National Park, Wy., vertical-grain cypress was used for acoustical ceilings in the newly renovated ticketing hall—even though the architect first specified Douglas fir.

"Unlike Douglas fir, cypress is classified as a hardwood and it performs just as well, or better," says Jonathan Robison, purchasing manager at Rulon Co., St. Augustine, Fl., a leading manufacturer of such ceilings. "It's easy to machine and dries better, too."

Lower shipping costs to and from Rulon's plant are another important factor. "Cost and availability is comparable to Douglas fir, but cypress is local to us."

As architects strive for environmentally friendly designs that qualify for LEED certification, they will continue to look to cypress—a durable wood with lasting beauty.

ACCOUSTICAL CEILING of the newly renovated ticketing hall at Jackson Hole Airport, Grand Teton National Park, Wy., was manufactured from cypress rather than Douglas fir. (*Photo by Rulon Co., St. Augustine, Fl.)*