



CYPRESS

Log Home Ascends to the Treetops

Challenged with building a log cabin in a Cincinnati neighborhood characterized by traditional Gregorian-style homes, architect John Senhauser paired the natural beauty of cypress with a creative design on a wooded site. The combination resulted in a 24-by-150-foot home that blends seamlessly into its surroundings.

While his client's desire to build a log home narrowed material selection, Senhauser said consideration was given to long-term cost, durability, and replacement scenarios. "As a renewable, local resource, lumber remains our primary choice for home construction," he noted. "While we had been considering cedar and pine, we were aware of the superior water and insect resistance of cypress."

During the development phase of the project, the team researched different log-home systems and attended a tradeshow to interview log framers and suppliers. "Due to tributary shrinkage of the tall walls in this structure, we chose to utilize a post-and-beam system, rather than a bearing wall system," Senhauser said. "The cypress logs are actually hung from the columns and are allowed to shrink on themselves."

"From my experience, cypress is easily milled and finished, and the quality of the material is excellent," he added. "We recently did some renovation work on a Frank Lloyd Wright Usonian house. The interior walls, trim, windows, exterior trim, and even the furniture are cypress. Fifty years later, the wood still possesses the rich, warm color characteristics of Wright's later works."



Cypress flitch beams and trusses were used to add architectural support and detail.



The home features cypress in a variety of applications, including interior and exterior wall coverings, cabinetry, and structural accents.



Senhauser's familiarity with cypress helped narrow the material selection even further, as he specified the versatile wood for several applications.

The exterior of the home was covered in cypress, finished with a transparent stain and sealer. For the interior, Senhauser selected cypress logs to line the walls, and tongue-and-groove cypress for the ceilings. A water-based polyurethane was applied to the interior cypress, preserving the honey tones and producing a warm glow from sunlight. Cypress veneer cabinetry, finished in a catalyzed lacquer for added durability and water-resistance, was crafted to serve the kitchen and other areas. In addition, cypress flitch beams and trusses were used to add architectural support and detail throughout the home.

As requested by the client, Senhauser preserved most of the site's environment, including an intermittent creek and walnut trees. While some trees had to be removed, they were milled into interior flooring, stair treads, and doors.

Complementing the extensive use of natural wood, the home features an angled green roof. Complete with native, seasonal grasses, the roof filters rainwater and releases it to the creek, minimizing erosion threats.

By using cypress and other natural wood, Senhauser was able to connect the inside with the outside in perfect harmony. "One homeowner observed that no two days are ever the same," he recalled. "The light, the changing seasons, and the cycle of growth and renewal never cease to make each day a special experience."

Senhauser could not be more pleased with the finished project. "The collaboration between client, architect, contractor, subcontractors, and suppliers yielded a truly unique experience and product," he noted. "The simplicity of the design, inextricably anchored to the site, provides a daring yet durable architectural expression of both personae and place."

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