

By Ian Faight



OUTDOOR FURNITURE made of cypress offers improved aesthetics, thermal properties, and durability. (Photo courtesy of Lake Cypress Outdoor Products)

Spending time outdoors with cypress

FOR HOMEOWNERS and buyers, outdoor living space continues to be a top feature in today's homes. And we're not just talking about basic patios, run-of-the-mill tables, and flimsy seating. Families who have been cooped up in their homes are investing in quality furnishings for their outdoor spaces. And what does that mean for lumber dealers and distributors? New opportunities for a beautiful, versatile, and distinctive wood like cypress.

Outfit Outdoor Kitchens

When it comes to kitchens, there can never be too much storage—and that goes for the outdoors, too, says Robert N. Holley of M&M Millworks of Louisiana, a custom cabinet shop in West Monroe, La.

"We focus on producing top-notch kitchen cabinets, regardless of if they'll be installed indoors or out," Holley says. "We prefer working with cypress because it's local, easy to sand, offers a rustic appearance,

and holds up well to the elements in all seasons—especially in our hot and humid climate."

Cypress also accepts a variety of finishes to meet any style, which is an attractive attribute for homeowners. "We partner with local painters to finish our projects, but if it were up to me, we'd use a clear sealer instead of a pigmented stain," he adds. "I like to show the wood's natural beauty."

Stunning Dining Tables

An outdoor kitchen wouldn't be complete without a dining table to sit down at and share a meal. And Benjamin Deshotels, a blacksmith and owner of Backwards Anvil LLC in Port Island, La., says no wood is better suited for this application than cypress.

"In our neck of the woods, cypress has a rich history and that's a big motivator to incorporate it into our projects," Deshotels says. "Cypress also performs well in outdoor environments, and it's resistant to insects

like termites and carpenter bees. These attributes make it perfect for outdoor tabletops—not to mention it's a beautiful wood with lots of character.

"I recently used cypress to build an outdoor table with matching bench seating. It's finished in an oil-based stain to enhance the wood's color and a few coats of spar varnish to provide protection from direct sunlight and UV rays."

Seating That's Built to Last

There are a lot of factors to consider when buying outdoor furniture—including quality, durability and price. And according to Steve Peugh of Lake Cypress Outdoor Products in Sulphur Springs, Tx., cypress checks all the boxes.

"We're a family-owned business that takes pride in crafting high-quality, Adirondack-style furniture, and we've preferred working with cypress for more than 30 years," Peugh explains. "Cypress is a naturally dura-

ble wood and it won't decay like pine and some other common species. It's also stronger and denser than cedar."


And when it comes to wood alternatives, like polywood and plastic, Peugh says there hasn't been much competition. "In my experience, people choose cypress for three reasons. First, cypress has better thermal properties and it won't heat up like alternative materials. Second, it's more durable and will last for many years. People think polywood will last forever, but it gets brittle and will break. And lastly, cypress is less expensive than wood substitutes—which is surprising to many customers.



OUTDOOR TABLE and companion benches were built of southern cypress and finished with a light stain. (Photo courtesy of Benjamin Deshotels with Backwards Anvil and Gary Hart with Sugar Mill Forge)



RUSTIC LOOK of cypress is right at home in many outdoor kitchens. (Photo courtesy of M&M Millworks of Louisiana)

"Homeowners are tired of replacing their outdoor furniture every few years, so they'll come to us to learn about and invest in cypress chairs, rockers, and swings. And at the end of the day, people don't want to sit on plastic, they want the real thing." 

— For more information on cypress and how it's being used in outdoor spaces, please visit the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association's website at CypressInfo.org and follow @cypress_info on Instagram.