

# Working with Pallet Wood



It is not often that one stumbles upon a very obvious, free, reliable and versatile building material that is as under-exploited as wooden pallets. Pallets are readily available and can be put to a number of good uses as they are, or broken apart.



## Where to find pallets

Pallets are very easy to come by. If you approach most companies who take regular large deliveries, or speak to companies based out on industrial estates, they will have a stock of pallets stored up. It is worth pointing out, however, that some pallets (usually painted blue or clearly stated as being someone's property) are not to be taken, and it's always best to ask first if you are not sure.

## How to break them up

Pallets are designed and built to last. Usually put together using ring shank nails and/or industrial nail or staple guns, they are certainly not designed to be taken apart!

Your options are:

- Use a crow bar to prise them apart
- Saw the wood as close to the nails as possible
- Use a heavy-duty chisel, an angle grinder or a hacksaw to saw through the nails

Either way, you will suffer some losses as they will split and break. The broken pieces can always be used for smaller projects, or cut down into kindling.



Pallets come in lots of different shapes and sizes. Most have the main pallet planks heavily nailed in, and the additional ones (the grey shaded ones in the photo left) are just tacked on. If you know someone with a quantity of pallets, ask them if you can have the easily removable pallet pieces out of them and you can quickly build

up a stockpile that way.

## Is pallet wood treated?

There has been increasing concern in recent years about the spread of pests through wood packaging material made of unprocessed raw wood. A recent worldwide initiative, ISPM15, was set up which stipulates that the wood be heat-treated and fumigated. Therefore it is recommended to exercise caution when using the wood if it is going to be in direct contact with food.

## 101 things to do with pallets

With a ready pile of pallet wood, a few basic tools (hammer, nails, saw, screwdriver and screws) the possibilities are endless!

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|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Compost bins | Bird houses | Shed         |
| Chicken coop | Planters    | Drinks tray  |
| Water butts  | Raised beds | Herb cabinet |
| Benches      | Solar dryer | Trellis      |
| Tables       | Fencing     | Shelving     |



**Warning:** Pallet wood will have sharp nails and/or staples so always use protective gloves when working with it