

Categorizing Hardwood Trees by their Monetary Value

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In short, every tree has value. Some have monetary value - but all have aesthetic, wildlife, ecosystem, or other intrinsic value measureable only by the observer. Forest management attempts to take all these values into consideration, with monetary value often of interest among forest landowners.

Monetary value becomes increasingly difficult to quantify with hardwood forests, given the richness of trees present throughout the region. Most hardwood forests have 20 or more unique species of trees.

This article is written to help summarize the monetary value of selected species for their wood product usage, with trees placed into very high, high, medium, and low value groups. Readers should note that some species fluctuate between high and medium, or medium and low depending on market demand, consumer preference, producer supply, and regional differences. For instance, even though black cherry has enjoyed a high market value in the northeastern states, its quality and resulting market value throughout the South is much less. Also, niche markets (often short-lived) can exist that allow for high prices to be offered for species that normally have low value. The following list is very general, but can help landowners, foresters, and educators with silvicultural decisions when managing forests to produce favorable incomes by managing for high "value" species. 

Traditionally Very High Market Value

Black walnut (lumber and veneer trees)
Oak veneer

Traditionally High Market Value

Red oaks (most)
White oaks (most)
Black cherry
Sugar maple

Traditionally Medium Market Value

Ash	Baldcypress
Yellow poplar	Hickory
Soft maple	Red cedar
Sassafras	Basswood

Traditionally Low Market Value

Cottonwood	Sycamore	Buckeye
Sweetgum	Blackgum	Mulberry
Elm	Hackberry	Locust
Willow	Boxelder	Hackberry
Beech	Birch	Tree-of-Heaven
Sourwood		