



heartwood
UNLIMITED

Managed blue gum plantations processed into high value timber products

Jon Lambert

Forestry Australia Conference 2025

Heartwood Unlimited Overview

- Established 1995
- Growing naturally durable hardwood plantations a multi-layered system (timber, livestock, carbon & biodiversity)
- Predominantly Gippsland, SE VIC
- ~50 privately owned properties
- ~3,500ha land & timber investment
- Average plantation size 20-200ha



heartwood
UNLIMITED



Radial Timber Australia Overview

- Commercialised sawmill commissioned in 2019
- Historically processed naturally durable hardwood ~10,000 tonnes p.a.
- Located in Yarram, Victoria
- Non-structural products
- Residential appearance products
- Sawlogs, veneer & decorative posts
- Also - firewood and bioenergy.



Blue Gum Potential

- Few older managed plantations from 1990s & 2000s
- Has class 2 above-ground durability
- Historically has growth stress issues
- Lyctus susceptible sapwood
- Light coloured timber



Blue Gum Plantation Trial

- 13.5 ha established in 2000
- Planted on 650mm rainfall site
- Pruned and thinned multiple times.
- Final stocking was 100 trees/ha.
- Clearfall 23.5yrs
- Harvest produced 1800 tonnes.
- Sawlog – firewood ratio 50:50
- Sawlog Spec 25cm SED
- Price \$190 per tonne





Milling Observations

- High tension when milling (blades)
- Variation between logs
- Early racking and strapping critical
- Gum build up on saws (like manna gum)
- Sapwood management required?



Milling Observations - cont

- 50, 75, 100 & 120mm boards cut
- Green recovery 32% (35-40cm SED)
- Green recovery 38% (+40cm SED)
- These figures are 38% & 45% in native
- More issues with inner (smaller) boards
- Blue gum worst offender for checking
- Ideally logs need to be +40cm SED!

Sales and Market Response

- Visually similar to silvertop (blonde)
- Strong appeal for plantation materials (architects & designers).
- Natural sawn-face finish gaining popularity
- Using the name “Southern Gippsland Blue Gum”
- Clients are open to trying plantation timber

Forestry Australia Conference, October 25



Stain Options





Blue Gum Wood Sales Overview

- Initial focus board and batten (green product)
- Vertical and above-ground
- Good cost recovery
- Over 60,000 lineal meters sold
- Predominantly for Residential Applications.
- Replacement for a traditional silvertop ash product.

Challenges & Considerations



- Surface checking (more prone than native)
- High shrinkage rate (10-15%)
- Profile variation – install difficulties
- Timing is everything (quick install required)
- BAL Ratings (being assessed)
- Durability (unknown)
- Legacy stigma



Overcoming Build Challenges

- Ensure builders get guidelines:
 - Fast install
 - Avoid storing in sunlight
 - Double screw
- Sales staff to provide the right information. Fit for purpose depends on:
 - design
 - orientation of build
 - timing of order and install
- Yet to have any replacement requests!



Further Trials & Product Development

- Dried (air & kiln) products recently molded
- Screen boards
- Grain separates out more on edges
- Dry recovery 81% (normal)
- Higher % of downgrade
- Checking & branches (in unpruned logs)
- Initial trial results are encouraging after 18 months

Looking Ahead

- **Continue Refining** handling, drying and milling techniques
- **Await** BAL and further durability test results for plantation-grown material
- **Expand** KD product lines and tweak profiles to what works best.
- **Build** further market trust through education and performance data.
- **Educate** staff and industry on where plantation products fit into the market.

