

Oregon Pine replaces Siberian Larch in Window Construction

Münchinger returns to importing Oregon Pine from Canada and uses this wood mainly in the production of window scantlings

The Münchinger Group, with their headquarters in Ötisheim (Baden-Württemberg) and their factory for window scantling production in Leutershausen (Bavaria), imports Oregon Pine from Canada and recommends it as a substitute for Siberian Larch. Harald Münchinger, Managing Director of Adolf Münchinger Holz Import- Export GmbH & Co. KG (Ötisheim), and Martin Seierlein, Managing Director of Münchinger Holz GmbH (Leutershausen), answered our questions on this topic.

Holz-Zentralblatt: Even after importing Siberian Larch was abandoned last year, significant quantities of finished products of this wood species were still available for purchase this year. How did you perceive the market development on the import, wholesale and retail levels? Which further development do you expect?

Harald Münchinger: Until July last year, the imported Siberian Larch was one of the important products for Münchinger. Then came the sanctions and the import ban on this wood is still in force today.

We from Münchinger adhere to the legal regulations, knowing well that there are still possibilities to obtain Siberian Larch illegally via third countries. Nevertheless, we believe that this wood will disappear from the market in the medium term for an indefinite period of time.

HZ: How was Münchinger involved in the Siberian larch business? How did you react to the developments?

Münchinger: Siberian Larch was a very



Martin Seierlein at the base of an Oregon pine trunk in a log yard in Canada

important part of our product range; we always had a large stock of this wood. After depleting the remaining stock, we will no longer list this type of wood - until further notice.

We now have the task of offering our customers a replacement product of the same quality that they can purchase without hesitation. When looking around, we very quickly came across Canadian Oregon Pine.

Back in the 1980s, the founder of our company, Adolf Münchinger, was one of the first to import Oregon pine from Canada and make it popular among our customers.

HZ: Which benefits do you see in favour of this wood species as a substitute for Siberian larch? In which areas of application do you use this type of wood?

Martin Seierlein: We look back on decades of expertise with Oregon Pine, also called Douglas Fir, and know all the advantages of this wood species. The wide range of available dimensions, the good durability and - very important - the classification in durability class 3 (VTT HO.06-1), all these benefits support Oregon Pine.

The areas of application include the entire structural timber construction as well as windows, doors, façades and conservatories. Oregon Pine is also ideal for decking and other outdoor applications where high natural resistance of the wood is required. For these applications, the Canadian wood species is an adequate substitute for Siberian larch.

HZ: Are there any special features to bear in mind when machining and installing Oregon Pine?

Seierlein: You can use Oregon Pine in window construction without any problems and, compared to Siberian Larch, there are no special challenges for window producer. Oregon windows were already produced in

Europe more than 40 years ago. All necessary experience is available.

HZ: The older generation associates Oregon pine primarily with wood from Canadian primeval forests. Where does the wood you import come from?

Münchinger: Nature conservation has been an absolute top issue in Canada for decades. Therefore, it goes without saying that the forests from which our wood comes are subject to constant monitoring. Of course, the Oregon pine we import is 100 % PEFC certified.

The Canadian forest industry contributes a large share to Canada's gross domestic product, in particular to that of the province of British Columbia (BC). In addition, forestry and the timber industry in Canada and especially in BC offer many people a secure income.

The promotion of a healthy, diversified and, above all, sustainable, generation-focused forest industry has therefore been a top priority for the Canadian government for many decades. The productive capacity of the forestry and timber industry shall be preserved in the long term.

This includes strict rules, laws, policies and regulations for the protection and welfare of indigenous people, forests, wildlife and other natural resources. The issues of reforestation, felling licences, quantity specifications, etc. are subject to permanent and strict supervision.

Only about 42 % (25 million ha) of BC's forests are available for harvesting. The remaining 58 % of the forests in this province - about 35 million ha, which is roughly equivalent to the total area of Germany - are preserved as primeval forests.

HZ: How do you judge the competition of Douglas fir wood grown in Europe compared to the qualities from Canada?

Seierlein: After various internal tests and also sample scantling production for some of our customers including consultation with these window manufacturers, we unfortunately have to conclude, that the domestic Douglas fir, because of its wood-specific properties, is only suitable to a limited extent for modern window construction with its high demands in terms



Oregon Pine window scantlings

Photos: Münchinger

of workability as well as technical and optical requirements.

As a niche product, domestic Douglas fir certainly has a justification and will also find its market, even to a limited extent. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to use this wood species on a large scale in window construction. In particular, the processing in the window manufacturing industry raises great challenges that can only be mastered with considerable effort.

HZ: Canada's forests and sawmills offer a variety of softwoods. Do you know of any other wood species that have new opportunities on the European market now that Siberian Larch is no longer available?

Seierlein: In addition to Oregon pine, there are also populations of Canadian larch in Canada, which is very similar to Siberian larch and could therefore theoretically be a good substitute for it. However, the quantity is very limited, and a reliable, permanent supply in all the required dimensions seems doubtful in the long run.

In addition, there is a large number of other wood species in Canada, but these can either be easily replaced by European softwoods due to their natural properties, or they are so expensive that large-scale use in window construction is out of question.

We believe that Oregon Pine is the number one wood species from Canada for the European window market. Because of the natural properties of Oregon Pine, there is no comparable softwood in Europe, except European larch, which is only available to a limited extent, however.

HZ: What can you say about the availability of this wood species in terms of quantity and quality? And what about the prices?

Münchinger: For our customers, reliable planning and availability of their products are one of the most important prerequisites when designing their product range. We are lucky that Canada is one of the most densely forested countries on Earth. And in addition to Hemlock and Western Red Cedar, Oregon Pine is the most available species. Thanks to our good, long-standing and cooperative relationships with various producers in Canada, we are confident that the supply situation for the qualities we require will remain secure in the future. Quality is our tradition, and this applies also to the Oregon Pine wood we offer: 100 % PEFC certified, durability class 3, a beautifully homogeneous colour and grain pattern - plus the wide range of dimensions and sizes, combined with an excellent price-performance ratio. This makes every "wooden heart" beat faster.