

Woodlink UK Offers PEFC Certified Alternative to Tropical Hardwoods

Beautiful and resilient, hardwoods are highly coveted for home furnishings, furniture and construction. However, they are also frequently associated with unsustainable forestry practices and deforestation. Now, a British-based company, Woodlink UK, offers a raft of sustainably sourced and certified hardwoods, including a new and innovative product: sustainable, plantation-grown Lyptus® timber.



Founded in 2007 and based in Halstead, Essex, Woodlink UK was previously part of Germany's Anders Group timber specialists. Since January 2011 it is wholly owned and managed by Cyril Williams. The company specializes in the import and distribution of quality, sustainable hardwoods including walnut, white oak, maple, cherry, ash and tulipwood, and now Lyptus®. Its customers include wood importers, timber merchants, builders and high-class cabinet makers, among others.

Sustainability is an important part of the company's ethos and strategy. Woodlink UK only trades in environmentally-friendly products from sustainably-managed sources. It does not trade in tropical woods or exotic species. All its sawn timber is sourced from North America.

The company has been PEFC certified from the outset. Implementing PEFC certification across its operations was a relatively straightforward exercise as the previous parent company, Anders, was already certified, enabling Woodlink UK to build upon already existing processes and audits. Today, 70-80% of the products it trades in are certified. The entire stock of Lyptus® wood is PEFC certified.

Hailing from plantations in near the east coast of Brazil owned and operated by local company Fibria, Lyptus® is a naturally occurring hybrid of two species of Eucalyptus tree, *Eucalyptus grandis* and *Eucalyptus urophylla*. It has been developed for quick harvesting – typically 15-20 years – and offers many of the advantages of traditional hardwoods – durability, weather-resistance. Crucially, it is grown on responsibly managed plantations making it a good alternative to traditional hardwoods such as oak, cherry and mahogany that take decades longer to mature. The plantations are certified to Brazil's Cerflor national sustainable forestry standard which is recognized by PEFC International. Another important feature of this wood is that it is being grown on plantations which are interspersed with re-introduced native species from the Atlantic Coastal Forests of Brazil. Thus, at the same time as offering a sustainable supply of wood, these plantations are also helping to restore the once severely depleted native forest to the region.

Once harvested, the Lyptus® lumber and decking are produced by the Aracruz Produtos de Madeira S.A. (APM) sawmill, a joint venture between Fibria and Weyerhaeuser.

A strong, hardy, durable, rich-coloured wood, Lyptus® lends itself to many external uses, including as decking and external frames among others, as well as joinery. Its aesthetic appeal was further confirmed at this year's Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show in London, where it was a key feature of the 'Monaco Garden' – sponsored by the Principality of Monaco under the patronage of Prince Albert – one of this year's Gold Medal Winners. The garden's eye-catching Lyptus® wood decking proved a particular hit with the judges and visiting public alike. Since the Flower Show, Woodlink UK has reported a substantial increase in demand for Lyptus® wood decking accompanied by a new-found awareness of sustainability issues and the importance of certification.

More recently, in August 2011, Woodlink UK was short-listed for a TTJ Market Development Award. Sponsored by Timber Expo 2011 and Trada Technology, the TTJ Market Development Awards recognize excellence and a commitment to sustainability in the timber industry. Now in their 15th year, the 2011 TTJ Awards will be presented on 15 September 2011, in London, UK. Woodlink has been nominated for its PEFC-Certified Lyptus® Decking.

PEFC certification has certainly yielded benefits for Woodlink UK. According to company owner Cyril Williams, being able to offer certified products gives the company a market advantage. Customers are increasingly demanding certified products from sustainably managed sources; what is more, they are often prepared to pay a premium for such products. Similarly, certified products give Woodlink UK access to new customers and sectors. For example, architects and members of the building profession are increasingly insisting on using certified products only. In the current market and commercial environment, this places a company like Woodlink UK in a more favourable position than other potentially non-certified suppliers. Now, the introduction of fully PEFC-certified Lyptus® wood is set to strengthen this position further. By offering a rapidly renewable, fully sustainable, viable alternative to tropical hardwoods, Woodlink UK is in a unique position to be able to respond to customer and market demand while at the same time making an important contribution to sustainable forest management.

In addition to supplying customers with wood and timber products, Woodlink UK is also involved in raising awareness among its customers and members of its supply chain of the importance and benefits of certification. Going forward, the company plans to ramp up its efforts in this direction.

Further Information

Woodlink UK - www.woodlinkuk.com

Lyptus® - www.lyptus.com