

Selecting Intarsia Wood

Preserve the beauty of your work by understanding the effects of time

By Mike Mathieu

For me, the best part of an intarsia project is picking out the wood to use. I spend hours matching up different colors and figures of wood. Often, woodworkers don't realize the vibrant wood they use in their project will change over time. Careful wood selection and a knowledge of how aging affects the color of specific woods will help your intarsia project stand the test of time.

I have been very fortunate to be able to use many different types of woods in my intarsia. I have learned a lot about the color changes wood goes through as it ages. When I created my first rose box, I used pink ivory for the rose. It was the most beautiful wood I had ever seen and it made the perfect rose. Unfortunately, pink ivory turns brown. I did some research and found bloodwood. As the name implies, the wood is red, and best of all, it stays red.

To save you the expense of choosing wood through trial and error, I'm sharing what I have learned from experience. Please note this is not a complete list, but it does provide a range of colors to help you make the most of your intarsia projects.



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Species	Color and figure	Intarsia uses	Effects of time
African padauk	reddish orange	orange background wood	darkens with age
American walnut	nice brown color	good general dark wood	no change
Apple	tan	flesh tone	darkens with age
Ash	wide open grain, light with tan stripes	landscape	no change
Bird's-eye maple	light tan	great accent wood	slight darkening with age
Bloodwood	red	anything red	no change
Bubinga	brick red with wild grain	good general wood	no change