

Timber Quality Advice – Sapele

Sapele is a popular choice for construction and external furnishings, but it is important to reiterate that **all solid timbers are organic materials** and therefore constantly change relative to their environment.

Surface Features

When specifying Sapele timber for your project you should expect the following natural features in the face and end grain of the pieces.

These features should not be considered defects and the extent of many surface features in the timber will change seasonally, sometimes closing up entirely due to natural expansion or shrinkage:

Knots

Although not as common in this species, knots do feature and cause dark blemishes on the surface of the timber – these can become more prominent when stained.



Splits/Checks

During the initial drying process, the outside of the wood dries quicker than the interior, which causes differential stresses to develop. The combined effect of these drying stresses in wood often results in the formation of a check or a split.

Sapele beams will sometimes have small or partial splits/checks visible on the end grain but unless they run the entire length of the piece, pose minimal structural concerns for application in non-load bearing exterior furnishings.



Shake

Shakes are lengthwise separations of wood along the grain usually occurring between or through the rings of annual growth. Shakes are commonly most noticeable on the end grain of a piece.



Grain Patterns

Sapele is known for a wide variety of grain patterns, such as: pommele, quilted, mottled, wavy, beeswing, and fiddleback. These contribute to a variation in colour.



Colour

Subtle variations in colour are to be expected give the nature of the species. Storage and treatment also play a large role in the colour of Sapele. See **Delivery & Storage** for more information.



Dimensional Tolerance & Movement

The sawmills and suppliers of our timber products will generally work to a rough-sawn dimensional tolerance of $\pm 6/-0$ mm. They will then ensure pieces are planed flat and cut to final size with all faces and ends square, with tolerances as close as $\pm 0.4/-0.4$ mm.

Sapele will also be subject to seasonal movement and other environmental factors, and dimensions are likely to change slightly from sawmill to our assembly plant to delivery on site.

As a general rule, a board/beam of 300mm can shrink/expand across its width as much as 6mm. This will dictate minimum distance adjacent timbers are spaced on a product as any contact between expanding pieces could have a severe effect on the integrity of the support or fixings. Longer Sapele pieces will also expand and contract at different rates along their length resulting in lines originally cut perfectly straight becoming wavy over time. It is important to allow the timber to move without restriction to avoid failure.

We can advise on any design changes/limitations to be set to minimise these issues.

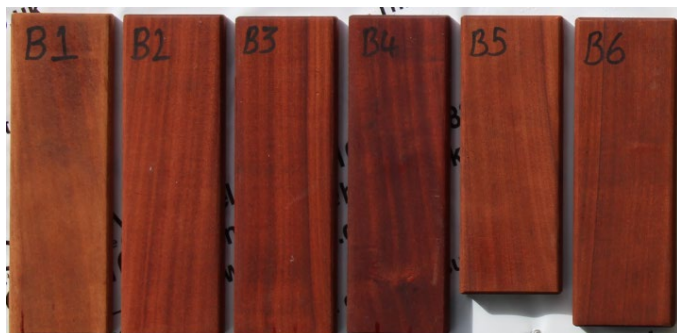


Surface Treatments and Protection

As standard **we do not treat Sapele timber** for street furniture – Weathering is a natural process where physical change is exhibited with exposure to outside elements. Moisture, Sunlight, heat/cold, chemicals, abrasion, etc all factor in the natural weathering process.

Weathering after 1 year

September 2021



September 2022



<i>Natural</i>	<i>Danish Oil 1 coat</i>	<i>Danish Oil 2 Coats</i>	<i>Danish Oil 3 Coats</i>	<i>Sadolin Burma Teak 1 coat</i>	<i>Sadolin Burma Teak 2 Coats</i>
B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6

Greying – Eventually whether treated or untreated, Sapele will naturally turn grey. The time this takes can vary from site to site and product type, mainly due to the exposure to sunlight and the elements.



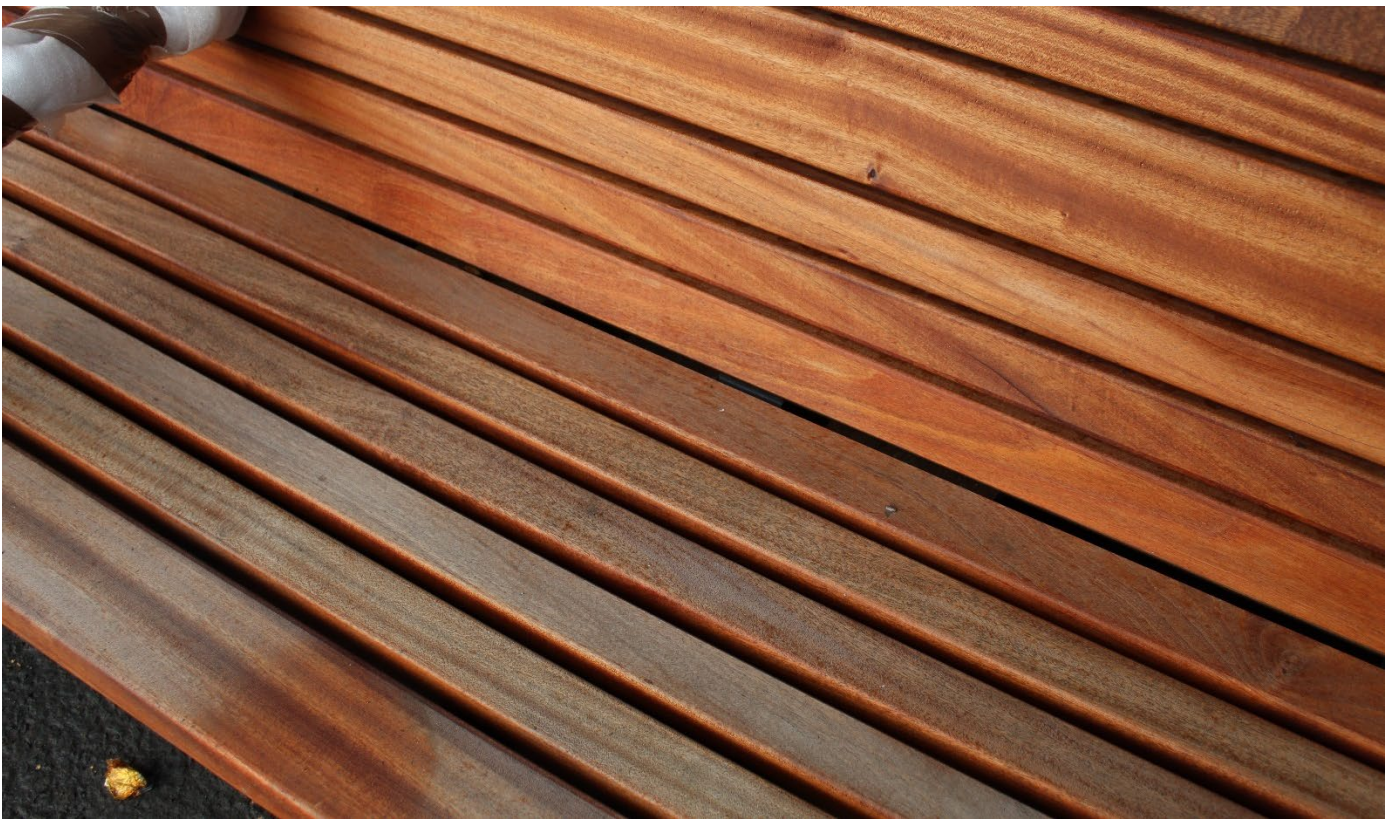
Delivery & Storage

We often deliver timber products to site strapped and wrapped for secure shipping and we are aware that products are commonly stored on site for weeks or months before installation:

If products are left tightly bound/strapped any natural movement may be restricted, leading to severe, uneven dimensional changes and even failure of the timber or fixings. **All strapping must be removed or loosened immediately following delivery to site.**

If products are left wrapped in shipping materials, they may be subject to much higher temperature and humidity than the surrounding environment, which will lead to moisture being drawn out from the wood at a high rate, potentially causing severe dimensional changes. As this moisture will have nowhere to go the products will accumulate a large amount of condensate, which can stain the timber and even damage steelwork; the timber may also begin to rot if left in this state for too long. **All wrapping must be removed immediately following delivery to site.**

Consider assigning an outdoor, but covered area to store furniture products before final installation.



The workshop team at Bailey Street Furniture Group will assess every piece of timber to be used in your furniture product and will reject those that have excessive splitting, warping or potentially dangerous surface features.

Faces will be sanded to minimum 80 grit and all sharp corners softened unless instructed otherwise.