



Reasons Why Riga-Baltic Birch Is a Preferable Plywood

1. Superior Screw Holding

Because the core layers of Riga birch are actually veneers of birch (rather than a softer, secondary wood) and form a void-free core, screws bite and hold with 100% of their threads. Conversely, traditional veneer core plywood has voids and is also made up of softer materials so screws don't get a chance to clench the best they can. You also might find sheet goods made with MDF (medium-density fiberboard) core, and though it's 100% solid, MDF is soft and just doesn't have the screw-holding power of Baltic birch.

2. Cleaner Joinery

Tipping the hat once again to the uniform birch veneer layers of the core, you'll get clean dadoes, rabbets, dovetails, miters, and fingers for strong and, when appropriate, great looking joints. Because the core is free of voids, your joinery also won't suffer from glue starvation—they'll get 100% glue coverage. Anything you build out of Riga birch should last a good, long time.

3. Improved Strength and Stability

All plywood runs the risk of warping, and the most common type of warp in plywood is bowing. Riga birch is not immune, it's still a wood product. However, Riga birch has the odds stacked in its favor much better than other plywood, chiefly in 1/2" and 3/4" thickness. The cross-banded layers of 1.5 mm thick birch veneer makes the sheets balanced, which promises a flatter product. However the thinner sheets, like 1/8" and 1/4", simply will not remain flat in large pieces—and this is no surprise. That's usually not a problem though because these are usually used in applications like drawer bottoms and cabinet backs where they're cut down to smaller sizes or captured in dadoes and rabbets. It should be obvious that the thicker sheets are more stable because they have more plies. 3/4" Riga birch in particular won't change much in width or length, that's why it's great for jigs and fixtures that need to maintain accuracy over the years.

4. Attractive Appearance

One of the fortunate benefits to Riga birch, too, is that you can leave the edges exposed if you like the look. Because the core is free of voids and all birch, the exposed edges sometimes have an appearance that works for the project, and this saves you time and material—no need to spend time and effort on applying edge tape or solid edge banding unless you want to. Simply sand and finish the edges as they are. The face and back can be stained when you need a different color. Like solid birch lumber, for it to stain evenly with an oil based pigment stain you'll need to apply a stain controller or a wash coat of dewaxed shellac. Otherwise use dye for even color. To keep the uniform, light color instead, simply finish Baltic birch with a basic clear top coat of lacquer or polyurethane.

5. Thicker Face Veneer with Reasonable Quality

With close inspection of Riga birch, you should notice that the face and back veneers are remarkably thicker than the veneers you'll see on traditional cabinet-grade plywood. Sadly, it's well-known that cabinet grade plywood veneer faces are dismally thin, which makes them easy to damage and easy to sand through. This is not the case with Riga birch. Outer veneers are nice and thick. As for the appearance, there are several grades of Baltic birch available, but we most often carry the optimal grade which is BB/WG. Plywood has two sides a face and a back—meaning one side is going to be better than the other, and they're graded separately. B is the grade of Baltic birch's face, or the best side. It's a whole-piece face with no splices, has a light and uniform color, and there are no patches, mineral streaks, knots or voids. The back side is graded BB (or WG) and slightly less attractive. There can be up to 6 color-matched "football" patches (about the size of a large egg), mineral streaks and small-but-sound dime-sized pin knots.

6. Accepts Paper Back Veneer for More Decorative Projects

If you like everything about Riga birch except its outer birch appearance (or occasional "football" patches), no problem. You can face this plywood with any kind of beautiful wood veneer that we carry (teak, Cherry etc.) Be sure to veneer both sides to maintain its stability.

7. It's Just the Thing for Laser Cutting and Engraving

It's one of the few types of wood that can come in large enough sheets and yet be consistently dense through its thickness to be cut with a laser. Anything from parts for architectural models to artwork to schmaltzy engraved knick-knacks.