

Subscribe | Give a Gift | Subscription Customer Service

Woodworking Magazine Weblog

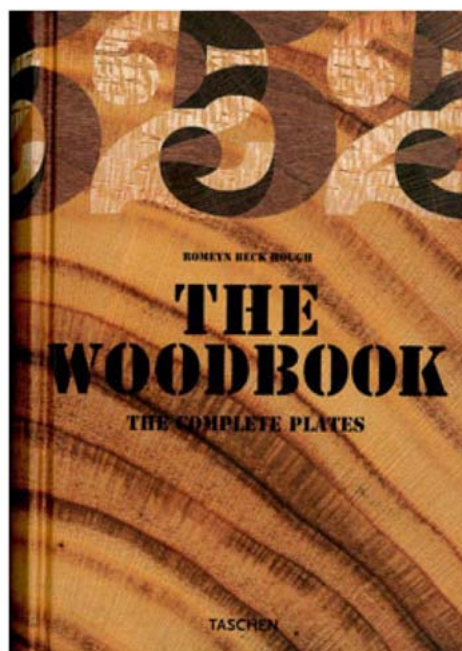
'The Wood Book' is Now Better (and Cheaper)

Posted 1/26/2009 in [All Weblog Posts](#) | [Required Reading](#)

Sometimes patience pays. Back in 2002, the Taschen publishing company released "The Woodbook" – a ridiculously priced and gorgeous book filled with photos of 354 American species of trees that showed you the end grain, the quartersawn grain and the plainsawn grain of each type.

If my memory serves, the book was about \$80 to \$100 – now it fetches \$200 on the secondary market. No matter how cool the book was, I wasn't going to buy it at that price. Senior Editor David Thiel got his hands on one (somehow), so I was able to enjoy it vicariously as long as I handled it with latex gloves (not included).

"The Woodbook" was actually a reprint of "The American Woods" (1888-1913) by Romeyn Beck Hough. The original version had actual veneer slices of each species on every page and was in 14 volumes. It is, naturally, very rare. So finding the original was also out of the question.



On Friday, this story got a happy ending. Taschen has reprinted the book yet again, improved the typography and lowered the price. It is now named "The Wood Book" (that extra space comes at no extra charge). And the list price is \$39.99, but you can find it [for sale for a shade more than \\$25](#).

This version is also a lot easier to read. The 2002 edition had black pages and the letters were in gold. You read that right. Perhaps you weren't actually supposed to read the descriptions; the only way you really could read it at all was to try to get the light to reflect off the letters just right.

The new 2007 edition has white paper with black letters. So not only can you read the text (which comes in English, French and German), but you also can see the drawings of the leaves of each species as well.

My two gripes with this book are the way the species are organized and the lack of technical data. It's inconvenient to find a species you are looking for unless you know its Latin name. Then you have to find it in the index to find the page number. But that's a quibble. As to the data in the book, most other sources contain more information on the physical attributes of the wood.

But the photos make up for any deficiencies in the text. They are gorgeous. Sharp. Detailed. And in color.

— *Christopher Schwarz*

[Comments \[3\]](#)