Materials Processing: Wood
Wood Identification

The purpose of this activity is to get you familiarized with the many different species of wood that exist around the world. How do you do that? Start by looking and touching. You have to look and feel tables, desks, chairs, cabinets, floors, moldings, speakers, stairs, bowling alleys, display racks in stores, lumber yards, hardware stores, cutting boards, chess pieces, etc… Do you have wood floors in your house? Do you know what kind they are? Do you know that or did someone tell you that? Be honest.
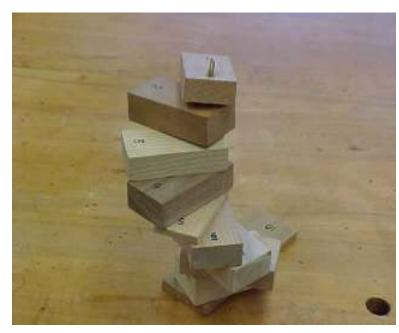
Each species of wood has its own characteristics; sometimes those characteristics are very distinct which makes identification easy. Sometimes, the characteristics are not very identifying at all and can at times be a bit misleading. For example, Balsa is a hardwood but does not exhibit any of the characteristics most of us associate with hardwoods, i.e., hard, heavy, tough on blades. So, the only way that this author knows of to get one to be able to identify wood is start identifying wood. (See 1st paragraph)

Don't just look at the wood, feel the wood. Yes, I mean *feel* the wood. Is it heavy? Does it have a rough texture? What does it smell like? Does it smell sour or sweet, rotten, or does it have no smell at all?

Sometimes the workability of the wood can tell you something about the species that can help you with identification but most lumber yards that I have been to all have the same phrase hanging on the wall that says, "We cut it, you bought it." Not to mention that you might build something out of what you thought cut like cherry to be told later that it is not cherry it is indeed butternut. Therefore, being able to identify wood prior to working it is a highly desired skill.

Activity
Design and build a wood identification key ring. The following conditions must be met.
1. minimum of 7 **Hardwood** samples
2. minimum of 3 **Softwood** samples
3. minimum of 4 **Engineered** samples
4. minimum of 1 alternative material (non wood product)
5. each piece stamped with identification code (letter)
6. a Tag that will serve as the key to the letter code on each sample (A= maple)
7. all edges must be broken (not sharp) for safety
8. creation of a document with the following data provided for each sample, **15 total** (see below)

<u>**Sample A**</u>
Common name:	Hard Maple
Finishing:	Fair
Workability:	Difficult
Sources:	USA, Canada
Characteristics:	hard, heavy, straight grain
Color:	light color, dark highlights
Common uses:	furniture, guitar necks, musical instruments, turnings