

Appendix 4

Wood Preservatives

Creosote: Banned in the UK from July 2003. Do not use materials treated with creosote or use up old supplies. Dispose of old supplies safely, contact your local authority to arrange disposal. The substitute 'Creocote' is unsuitable for use in organic systems.

Pressure treated timber: This has been impregnated with chemicals under pressure to ensure full penetration into the wood. Copper chrome arsenate (CCA) treatments that used to be commonly used are now banned for products for domestic use. Safer alternatives include Tanalith E[®], made from a copper and organic biocide (triazole) formulation, and Wolmanite, which contains copper and boron (see below).

Boron compounds: Boron compounds appear to have a low toxicity to humans and the environment. Very soluble in water, so for outdoor use boron is applied in the form of glass rods, inserted into pre-drilled holes in the timber. Timber pre-treated with boron compounds can be purchased, but due to the compound's solubility in wet soil it is only suitable for use above ground or indoors. Liquid borax timber preservatives can also be painted on, for indoor and outdoor use. Glycol borates and impregnated glass rods are only licensed for professional use.

'Natural' preservatives: Plant based wood preservatives are claimed to be safer to use than the traditional chemical materials. We do not have the information to support or refute that claim. Wood pitch and other products extracted from timber have the potential to be as harmful as coal-derived creosotes. Raw linseed oil and tung oil have been used in the past to treat timber outdoors. But they do not prevent mildew.

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