

SYP and **SPF** are different animals...

SYP...

With more than 100 types growing worldwide, almost everyone gets pine confused. Only a handful of domestic pines commonly are used and may be separated into hard and soft -- or yellow and white. Yellow pine, consisting of shortleaf, longleaf, slash and loblolly, is classified as hard. White pine, consisting of sugar, eastern and western, is classified as soft. Both groups generically are referred to as white or yellow.

Yellow pine is a native of the Southeastern United States, growing naturally on plantations as far west as Mississippi and south to Virginia. It is one of the least-expensive applications for flooring that requires durability in high-traffic areas. Yellow pine has excellent strength-to-weight ratio. For this reason, it's used more often than white pine for structural members such as trusses, joists, poles, sheathing, subfloors and plywood

White pine grows prolifically on the East and West coast of the United States, and in Canada and Mexico. Lightweight and soft, white pine is even textured and easily milled and carved. White pine is used for items such as carvings, molding, millwork, trim, boards for boxes, crates and specialty items such as knotty pine paneling, cabinetry and furniture. White pine is the least resinous of all the pine species, lacking the pitch pockets found on other pine varieties.

Color is not a deciding difference between yellow and white pine. All of them are amber colored, ranging from yellow to off-white. Grain patterns are a bit more obvious, and all of them are relatively straight. Yellow pine tends to have a bolder, more pronounced grain pattern than white. Density is the deciding difference. Yellow pine has a density rating of about 870 on the Janka scale,, which ranks it up there with cedar at 900. White pine, with a density rating of only 380, is one of the lowest-rated woods on the scale.

SPF

Fir often is confused with pine in regard to construction-grade lumber. With the prevalence and availability of Douglas fir, the use of yellow pine -- which is harder than fir -- is declining. If you live on the West Coast, its likely you'll use fir for your framing needs. If you live on the East Coast where yellow pine is prolific, it's more likely to be available -- but it's becoming harder to find. If you have a preference, make it clear when ordering that you want yellow pine for your construction needs.

SPF is an acronym, which stands for spruce, pine and fir and it's a combination of those Canadian trees grown in various regions of the country. All produce high-grade timber with relatively small, sound tight knots and the color of ranges from white to pale yellow.

Lumber produced from these species is marketed together as SPF. The lumber you see could be any one of the three types of trees, and possibly contain one or more species within the type (for example, more species of spruce).

SPF Species

Eastern species:

Black spruce (*Picea mariana*)

Red spruce (*Picea rubens*)

White spruce (*Picea glauca*)

Jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*)

Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*)

Western species:

White spruce (*Picea glauca*)

Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmanni*)

Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*)

Alpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*)

Western SPF lumber is usually available in larger sizes than eastern SPF given the climate and size of logs. Eastern SPF trees grow slowly and have superior strength.