

Terms, People, and Ideas

From Japanese wood-charring techniques to technologically advanced timber, this overview explores how we think about wood, and how we build with it, too.

BIOPHILIA

A recognition that our connection with nature triggers an innate positive response. Biophilic design, then, speaks to our desire to bring the outdoors in, and has influenced everything from city planning to interior design. Spaces with a strong timber presence have a demonstrated ability to reduce stress and make us feel safer—in other words, the intuition of nature that comes with wood just makes us feel better. (See “Closeness to Nature Calms the Mind,” page 212.)

CARBON SINK

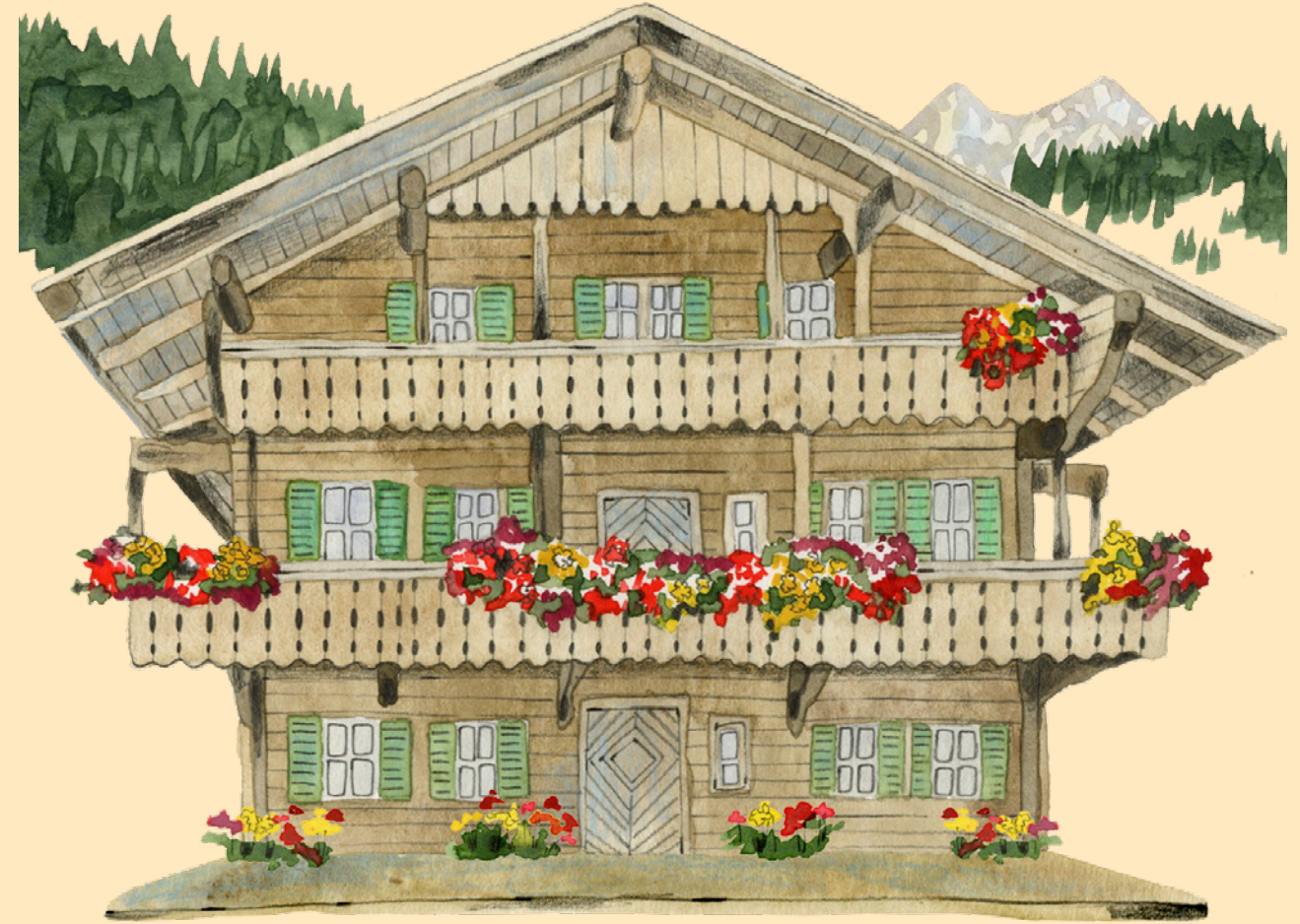
A process or entity that absorbs more carbon out of the atmosphere than it releases—like a tree, for instance. The removal of carbon from the atmosphere is referred to as carbon sequestering. Other examples of a carbon sink include soil, as well as the ocean, where some marine animals absorb carbon dioxide for photosynthesis.

CERTIFIED TIMBER

Organizations like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) in North America exist to ensure forest products—including both timber and paper—come from responsibly managed forests according to a set of standards, and they certify those products accordingly. In addition to concerns around sustainability, the well-being of workers and indigenous peoples are also key issues that contribute to the certification of timber.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY

In forestry, the chain of custody refers to the path timber has taken through the supply chain, from forest to finished product. Understanding this chain is an important step in ensuring the product is sourced from a sustainably managed forest and doesn’t originate from a part of the world with a high incidence of illegal logging.



CHALET

One of the most recognizable architectural expressions of the Alpine region, the chalet is typically pictured with a sloping roof, shutters, and flowers blooming beneath the windows. Historically, these dwellings were built as summertime homes for farmers, but they have since become a symbol of mountain leisure around the world.

The simple form recurs in *Out of the Woods*—it is fertile ground for architects looking to reinvent a beloved vernacular form. (See “Innauer-Matt Architekten,” page 88.)

CLADDING

Timber cladding, or timber weatherboarding, is used by architects looking to finish the outside of a building with wood. Beyond its aesthetic qualities, this kind of cladding offers a layer of protection from the elements and helps to insulate the building, especially when naturally durable woods such as cedar or larch are used. But cladding isn’t limited to the exterior—cladding interior walls with timber results in a warm and natural-feeling environment.

CORK

Increasingly seen as a viable building material beyond its traditional use as insulation, cork was used, for example, in the Recyclable Cork House by Matthew Barnett Howland (opposite page), which is built from cork blocks and was short-listed for a Stirling Prize in 2019. To extract cork from cork trees, only the bark—the outer layer, which grows back—is needed; there is no need to fell an entire tree to harvest the material.

CROSS-LAMINATED TIMBER (CLT)

This type of engineered timber has been hailed by some as “the new concrete.” It is made by gluing panels of wood together, one set at right angles to the next, resulting in an ultra-strong material. It is lightweight, durable, and cost-effective when compared to building with steel and concrete.

The relatively new engineered timber was developed in the early 1990s, and, 30 years later, is catching on in earnest. Architects like Oslotre (profiled on page 146) work extensively with the nascent material, exploring its new possibilities.

↑ Recyclable Cork House, designed by Matthew Barnett Howland, is a contemporary example of cork architecture. Cork is fast growing and its extraction doesn’t require felling the tree. ↗ An example of classic chalet architecture, historically found throughout the European Alps.