

## Basswood Plywood

American Basswood Plywood carves easily and performs similarly to Shina. Shina and Bass are both members of the genus *Tilia*, as are the Lime or Linden trees found in Europe. Like Shina, you can carve Basswood in any direction and the wood cuts easily without tearing or chipping. Also like Shina, Basswood grows quickly and abundantly, and there is a sustainable supply.

Unlike Shina, the surface of Basswood Plywood has a slightly raised straight grain pattern. Those of you who like to see a little grain pattern on your prints will enjoy this but if you prefer a smooth look, these blocks

are easily sanded with an orbital sander or by hand.

3/8" Basswood Plywood can be safely carved on both sides. As usual you need to be aware of how deeply you are carving. If you are printing on an etching press and using heavy pressure, and you have carved both sides of the block, you may see inconsistencies in large image areas of your print. It all depends on how much wood is carved away and how much pressure is applied. We have not heard of anyone having this problem when printing with a baren or on a letterpress.

### How to Sand Basswood Plywood

Basswood is a soft wood so excessive sanding is not necessary.

If you are hand-sanding, use a sanding block (available at hardware stores) or wrap the sandpaper around a block of wood.

Start with coarse (80 grit) sandpaper to knock down the grain, then switch to a medium (150 grit) and finish with a fine (220 grit) sandpaper. Work progressively and don't skip grits.

It is important that the sandpaper stays flat and distributes the pressure evenly over the surface of the wood. Sand *with* the grain of the wood to avoid scratches that may print. In addition, sand the block evenly, including the outer edges, so the entire block is the same height to avoid low areas that will show up on the print. To speed

things up, brush off the block frequently so the sandpaper is in contact with the wood and not dust that has gathered on the surface. Change the sandpaper whenever it starts to look worn and the job will go much faster.

Work will go much more quickly with an electric sander; we were able to achieve a pleasant surface on a 9x12 test block with just a few moments of work using 150 grit sandpaper and a random orbital sander. However, as with any power tool, be aware that mistakes like low-spots or rounded edges will be that much easier and drastic as well.

Whether sanding by hand or with a power tool, working slowly and steadily will give the best results.



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