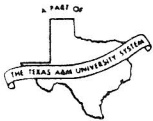


TEXAS FOREST SERVICE



File 3.5471

**TEXAS FOREST
PRODUCTS LABORATORY**
POST OFFICE BOX 310 · LUFKIN, TEXAS 75901

January 27, 1976

Mr. Ian Stewart
Forest Park High School
8750 Calder Ave.
Beaumont, Texas 77706

Dear Mr. Stewart,

Your request for information concerning "curley pine" has been forwarded to me. This term was not familiar to me or anyone I talked to so I had to look through all the old literature. I am enclosing the two bits of information I did find.

Curley pine appears to be a grain deviation found in old Southern yellow pine. The four main species of which are longleaf, shortleaf, loblolly, and slash pine.

A little history appears to be in order at this time. Back in the late 1800's and early 1900's East Texas was covered by longleaf pine with some loblolly and shortleaf mixed in. This was a "virgin" forest with most of the trees being well over 100 years old. When pine trees reach this age they produce very little wood each year but what they produce is usually very hard and dense. By the late 1920's basically all of East Texas (including the Big Thicket) had been clear cut. All of the old trees had been harvested and sent to the mill.

The sawmills in those days were family affairs. Labor was a very cheap commodity and the sawmills could afford to hire more men than they actually needed. This is why they had men available to stand by the sorting chain and pull a specialty item like "curley pine". It appears that only a small percentage of the trees had curly grain.

What are things like today? Presently we are harvesting the second growth forest and planting the third. Most of the land owners are set up on a 40 year rotation or sooner. In one of the enclosed articles, it stated the tree under investigation did not produce any curly grain for the first 50 years. If this is true for all pines capable of producing curly grain, then the trees in Texas are cut before they are old enough to produce "curley pine".

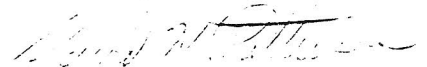
One of the major expense items in a present sawmiller's budget is the labor force. More and newer machinery is being added to sawmills so that one man can now do the job previously done by 4 men. Most of the mills are looking for quantity and they don't have anyone looking for specialty items such as fancy grain.

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One becomes sad to look back at the way things were and everyone is tempted to try and go back or restore the past status quo. But one must face the facts. It costs money to prepare the land and plant trees. Every year the trees are growing, they are susceptible to insect attack (southern pine beetles have been known to kill acres of pine trees), wildfire is always a threat (a week ago a timber company lost a 1500 acre plantation to wildfire) and tornados and hurricanes can always do damage. While these trees are growing the landowner is paying taxes each year. Of all the investments involving land, growing timber is the least profitable. So as you can see, economics has forced "curley pine" lumber out of existence.

I hope this letter answers your questions. If you have any further questions about this subject or any other involving wood, please feel free to write or call.

Sincerely,



David W. Patterson
Service Technologist

DWP/lp

Enclosure