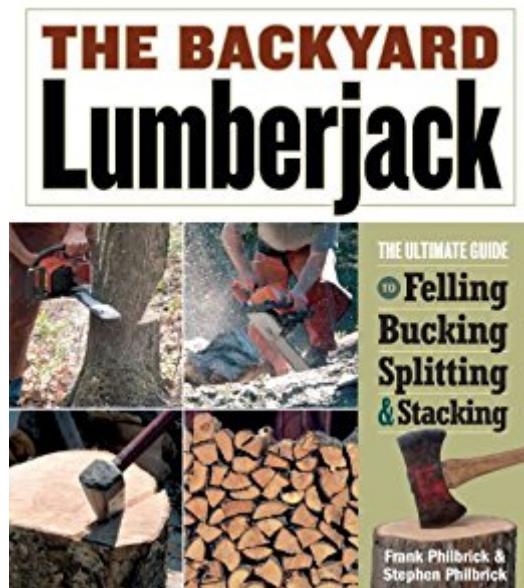


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# The Backyard Lumberjack



## Synopsis

Whether you're splitting a cord of wood for your fireplace or managing acres of woodland, The Backyard Lumberjack provides plenty of practical instruction and firsthand advice. Familiarize yourself with the proper equipment and safety gear, then learn how to fell, buck, split, and stack your own wood supply for the season. Veteran lumberjacks Frank Philbrick and Stephen Philbrick cover everything you need to know to bring a tree from the forest to your fireplace, safely and effectively.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I snagged this book since I gravitate to most things involving wood and axes. I liked the layout and really enjoyed the tales of their neighbors and friends, but when I read the part about how to fell a tree I couldn't help but cringe. Felling trees is a regular part of my job with the US Forest Service. I'm no grizzled veteran faller but those I've worked with have enough confidence in my abilities to make me a saw instructor for our newer employees. That said, I found much of the Phibrick's falling process to be downright dangerous. The biggest example is their simple face cut. The photo shows

a substantial dutchman (where the flat part of your face cut passes beyond the angle part). End result is you have little to no holding wood to control your tree on its way to the ground. If it's leaning back just a hair, or the wind pushes back, it'll just shear that little bit of wood (or big bit if your back cut is triple the appropriate size as the author's is) along the grain and the tree will go where it pleases. You want to have as much control of the tree as you can, especially if you have a wife and kids waiting for you at home. I could elaborate but I don't want to rant (too much). If you're looking for sound advice on falling trees (easy or complex) look to Professional Timber Falling by Douglas Dent, available at good logging supply warehouses, or find a copy of the Falling and Bucking Safety Guide put out by the Oregon state OSHA. Enjoy the stories and the nice pictures of stacked firewood around the world that this book offers, but please take your tree falling lessons from someone with a better understanding. I was astonished that the publisher seems to have skipped even the most basic technical review before putting it to the press.

I have a mixed reaction to this book. On the positive side, I thoroughly enjoyed the authors' stories, insights, and personal asides. For them, "lumberjacking" is as much a metaphor for life as it is a means to physical warmth or woodlot maintenance. This made for an entertaining and accessible read. On the negative side, I really wanted more hard information. I have a 13-acre woodlot that requires regular care, and I had hoped for far more detail on how to approach difficult felling and bucking situations, especially since I often have to work alone. For example, a recent windstorm brought down about ten 70-80 foot pines, most of which are hung up at various angles on other trees. The book sheds very little light on how to deal with hung trees, other than to note that they can be tricky. For example, should they be notched from underneath with a felling cut down from the top like an ordinary tree? What effect does the added tension/compression on the trunk have in this situation? What should be done when two or three trees are hung up as a group, so that freeing one holds a strong risk that the entire stack may come down (a very dangerous situation)? Is it ever appropriate to apply tension (using, say, a come-along) to help direct a tree (hung or otherwise) that wants to fall in an undesirable direction? This is just one example, however, there were many places in the book where I felt that it was long on story telling (which is a fine thing, don't get me wrong) and short on hard core "how to".

Lots of pretty pictures and cute writing. 23 full color pictures of the authors swinging splitting mauls. Lots of pictures of them doing all sorts of things. A really eccentric felling style. I wouldn't try it. There are much better, safer and more accurate methods in general use.

I read several less than stellar reviews on this book before I bought it - but bought it anyway - hoping that the specific flaws those reviews pointed out were the only ones. (Ironically, I paid full price for this book at a convention - shame on me - I should have bought a "used" one on for half the new price.) The storytelling IS good, but for a book that bills itself as "THE ULTIMATE GUIDE" - there is simply not enough detailed, specific information. You could pretty much pick up what this book "teaches" by reading a page or two our of Storey's "Basic Country Skills" book. Frankly, no one area out of felling, bucking, splitting or even stacking is covered in "ultimate" detail. It is a fun book to read. A fast read. I enjoyed the stories, but I will need to find another better book. I can't and won't argue the wisdom or even safety of the 45 degree vs 90 degree notch cut to fell a tree. I use the 90 and find that it sometimes leaves me with tree that are still attached to the stump and under tension when it is down. This makes for some dicey surgery to relieve that tension before the tree can be limbed and bucked. Perhaps the 45 degree notch (that another reviewer blasts as horribly unsafe) actually has some positives as the tree snapping off once it passes 45 degrees could be a GOOD thing. After all, you shouldn't be standing around that area anyway, and the "hinge" can't do much guiding past 45 degrees anyway. (Hey, if that tree is falling the wrong way past 30 degrees, you're already in trouble!) The authors also seem to have a problem with finishing their little stories. I found myself waiting for a moral or a punch line many times.

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