



AHEC brings 'Wood for the Trees' to Shoreditch Design Week



Mitre & Mondays-designed forest-to-product timber exhibition to open at London Design Festival 2026



Wood for the Trees exhibition at Material Matters in Copenhagen. Photography by Petr Krejčí

- AHEC, Mitre & Mondays and Benchmark collaborate on an immersive hardwood exhibition for Shoreditch Design Week.
- Evoking a forest environment, *Wood for the Trees* takes visitors on the journey of hardwood from forest to product.
- The exhibition is inspired by AHEC's feature documentary *Forested Future*, and makes the case for responsible forestry and sustainable material use.

On 15–20 September 2026, the American Hardwood Export Council (AHEC) returns to London for Shoreditch Design Week, inviting the global design audience to explore the environmental, structural and aesthetic potential of American hardwoods with an immersive storytelling exhibition created by design studio Mitre & Mondays, and built by the timber-craft impresarios of Benchmark.



After a triumphant reception at Material Matters in Copenhagen during 3daysofdesign earlier this year, AHEC is bringing a refreshed and expanded edition of *Wood for the Trees* to London Design Festival. Installed within the grand setting of the Shoreditch Tab Centre, *Wood for the Trees* will take visitors on a spatial journey into the world of hardwood forestry. Drawing on Mitre & Mondays' focus on social and environmental impact, regenerative materials, and design for reuse and repair, studio directors Finn Thomson, Josef Shanley-Jackson and Freya Bolton have conceived the exhibition as an abstracted version of a forest, using timbers from underused species and grades to serve as column-tree trunks, stump-stools, log-benches and a forest canopy of suspended veneers. Created from 'No.1 Common' (commonly regarded as 'cabinet-grade' timber), all components are designed for easy disassembly, enabling them to be readily reused after the exhibition concludes.

Wood for the Trees draws on the ideas and themes explored in AHEC's recent feature documentary *Forested Future*, which examines our relationship with forests through the lens of the people and communities whose livelihoods depend on them. As realised by the peerless craft expertise of Benchmark, Mitre & Mondays' vision for the exhibition translates the story on screen into a design-led spatial experience, borrowing from the forms, arrangement and species variety the forest provides.

Previously, AHEC has used its platform at London Design Festival to showcase its collaborations with established and emerging designers, demonstrating the creative possibilities of underutilised hardwood species through product innovation and sculptural spectacle. This year, AHEC is widening the focus, not only highlighting the material beauty and versatility of hardwood, but providing an overview of the role of hardwoods in a broader environmental system that encompasses responsible forestry, carbon storage and long-term sustainability. *Wood for the Trees* makes the case that the use of a diversified range of timber helps incentivise landowners to maintain their forests for generations to come.

Take a walk in the woods with Mitre & Mondays

**WOOD
FOR THE
TREES**



Wood for the Trees exhibition at Material Matters in Copenhagen. Photography by Petr Krejčí

A century ago the hardwood forests of the eastern United States were little more than ‘stumps and ashes’, but in the last 100 years they have recovered, now spanning more than 40 million acres and growing at twice the rate they are harvested.

Visitors to *Wood for the Trees* will be immersed in an abstract arboreal setting, examining every phase in the journey of hardwood timber from tree to finished product, through six key stages that unfold into the world of responsible forest management, and making the case for the long-term stewardship of nature.

As well as designed objects and material applications, the exhibition will include educational storytelling, expressed through audio-visual elements, graphic and narrative displays.

In the context of an increasingly uncertain environmental future, the show explores how growth, planning and resilience underpin the long-term health of North America’s hardwood forests, and the influence that material selection and timber use have on sustaining them.

Wood for the Trees takes the visitor through six stages in the story of timber:



1. **Growth** looks at how trees – among the largest and longest-living organisms on earth – reproduce, regenerate and even clone themselves, allowing them to persist across generations, adapting to change over time.
2. **Stewardship** explores both the day-to-day realities and century-spanning timescales of forest management, examining the life cycles of trees and the systems and strategies employed to sustain them.
3. **Selection** unpacks the meticulous process of identifying trees for harvest and for preservation, and the factors that influence it – including age, health, longevity, and the tree's contribution to the vitality of the wider forest ecosystem.
4. **Resilience** considers the ability of a forest to withstand change – adapting to shifts in climate, resisting pests and disease, and recovering from disturbance – the role foresters play in strengthening that ability, and the impact that our material choices can have in shaping it.
5. **Timber** looks at the point where the forest meets the human world, and reveals the history carried in the grain of every piece of wood.
6. **Design** suggests how we can learn to use what the forest provides, adjusting our habits and to align with the properties and availability of this extraordinary natural resource.

Workshops and events

Wood for the Trees is accompanied by a free programme of supporting events including workshops, live music and talks, offering opportunities to explore the exhibition's themes in greater depth.



Screening: Forested Future

Monday 14 September, 6.30–9.30pm

[Register here](#)

AHEC presents an exclusive screening of the inspiration for the exhibition – Petr Krejčí's feature documentary *Forested Future*. Drawing on the book *A Trillion Trees* by Fred Pearce, the film follows the lives and work of the people whose lives are woven into the story of America's hardwood forests. The screening will be followed by a drinks reception, with live music from folk musician Van Wagner.

Workshop: Mouthbow-making

Tuesday 15 September to Friday 18 September, 11.00–11.30am

[Register here](#)

Pennsylvanian folk musician Van Wagner hosts mouthbow workshops in the main hall at the Tab Centre, showing up to 20 people a day how to construct their own wooden mouthbows and create authentic music using the world's oldest stringed instrument.

Talk: Selection and specification from Forest to Furniture –

Understanding the tree behind the timber

Tuesday 15 September, 1–2pm

[Register here](#)

Join Benchmark's founder Sean Sutcliffe and AHEC's Neil Summers for a practical and hands-on workshop designed to help architects specify timber more effectively. Gain a deeper understanding of how species, grades, grain and material behaviour impact aesthetics, performance, manufacture and longevity.

In conversation: Fred Pearce

Tuesday 15 September, 5–7pm

[Register here](#)

English environmental journalist and writer Fred Pearce is joined by forest ranger and former sustainability director of the Hay Festival Andy Fryers to discuss the ideas behind his books *A Trillion Trees* and the newly published *Despite It All – A Handbook For Climate Hopefuls*. Signed copies will be available to purchase at the event.

Talk: Working with Wood – How design decisions shape the longevity of timber furniture

Wednesday 16 September, 1–2pm

[Register here](#)

Understand how design intent is translated into furniture that lasts. Through examples and discussion with the Benchmark Design team, explore how detailing, material choices, construction methods and repairability influence performance, maintenance and longevity.

Party: Wood for the Trees

Wednesday 16 September, 6.30–8pm

[Register here](#)

AHEC, Mitre & Mondays, and Benchmark celebrate *Wood for the Trees* with an evening drinks event. As well as an introduction to the exhibition and the world of hardwood forestry by AHEC's European Director David Venables and the project partners, the evening includes live music and a conversation with Pennsylvanian folk musician and forest campaigner Van Wagner, as well as a sphere-oiling workshop, giving participants the opportunity to prepare their own timber sphere to take home.

Talk: Growing Forests, Growing Trust – Proving provenance through transparency and the next generation of timber verification

Thursday 17 September, 1–2pm

[Register here](#)

Join AHEC and Benchmark for an interactive demonstration to explore how the EUDR is reshaping the timber supply chain. Discover American Hardwood Assured (AHA), AHEC's groundbreaking verification platform, combining deforestation assessment, jurisdictional legality checks, blockchain and isotopic testing to prove provenance at a scale and accuracy previously out of reach.

Class: Forestry with Van Wagner

Thursday 17 September and Friday 18 September, 4.30–5.30pm

[Register here](#)

Educator and folk musician Van Wagner introduces participants to the forest ecosystem, with an exclusive talk and a programme of hands-on activities designed to unlock insights both into individual wood species and the forest as a whole.

Wood for the Trees is free to visit at Tab Centre, 3 Godfrey Place, London E2 7NT throughout Shoreditch Design Week on 15–20 September 2026.

For more information, please contact ahec@zetteler.co.uk



Notes for editors

Wood for the Trees

Tab Centre, 3 Godfrey Place, London E2 7NT



Opening hours

Tuesday 15 September: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Wednesday 16 September: 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Thursday 17 September: 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Friday 18 September: 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Saturday 19 September: 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

Sunday 20 September: 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM

woodforthetrees.info

#WoodfortheTrees

Press hub

Accredited press are invited to make use of the official Shoreditch Design Week Press Hub at *Wood for the Trees*' venue, Tab Centre, throughout the festival. The Press Hub offers a comfortable space to catch up on emails, recharge between appointments, enjoy free refreshments and connect with fellow members of the media.

Press preview breakfast: 9:30am–10:30am, Tuesday 15 September

Above the Canopy

Presented above the forest canopy as part of AHEC's *Wood for the Trees* exhibition, Benchmark invites visitors to consider the journey of timber beyond the forest.

Through considered design, skilled craftsmanship and circular thinking, the furniture on display demonstrates how timber can be celebrated and appreciated for generations.

A programme of informal, hands-on workshops explores the decisions that shape this outcome, from understanding timber at specification stage and designing for longevity, to the emerging tools that provide greater transparency, traceability and confidence in timber sourcing.

AHEC

AHEC, the American Hardwood Export Council, is the leading international trade association for the American hardwood industry. For over 30 years, AHEC has built a distinctive global reputation through design-led collaborations, research-driven projects and high-profile exhibitions that demonstrate the performance and sustainability of American hardwoods. By placing design at the centre of its work, AHEC continues to engage the global design community in meaningful dialogue around materials, environmental responsibility and the future of making.

americanhardwood.org

[@ahec_europe](https://twitter.com/ahec_europe)

Mitre & Mondays

Mitre & Mondays are a London-based studio designing and manufacturing objects and spaces that help connect people to the material world around them. Their motivating force is that design should present a future for everyone, proving you can offer solutions to the social and environmental challenges of the day, whilst inspiring curiosity and excitement. Designing for disassembly, reuse and repair, Mitre & Mondays go beyond sustainability, focusing on the social and environmental impact of production, building on their knowledge of circular systems and regenerative materials.

mitreandmondays.co.uk

[@mitreandmondays](https://twitter.com/mitreandmondays)

Benchmark

A powerhouse of craft, Benchmark is one of the UK's leading furniture-makers. Founded by Terence Conran and Sean Sutcliffe in 1984, the company has a mission to create furniture that contributes to human health and wellbeing, using natural, sustainable and non-toxic materials. With workshops in Berkshire and Dorset, Benchmark works with many of the world's leading architects and designers on commercial and residential projects. From forest to finished piece, Benchmark is positioned as a leader in sustainable enterprise. Its approach marries forward-thinking design with exemplary levels of craftsmanship and creativity, producing furniture that exudes natural warmth and soul.

benchmarkfurniture.com

[@madebybenchmark](https://twitter.com/madebybenchmark)



Materials

With special thanks to Bingaman & Son Lumber, MacDonald & Owen, Northland Forest Products, Salamanca Lumber Company, Granite Valley Forest Products and Rossi Lumber for their timber donation.



Wood for the Trees exhibition at Material Matters in Copenhagen.
Photography by Petr Krejčí

American red oak

Quercus species, mainly *Quercus rubra*

American red oak is the dominant species in the U.S. hardwood forests – with distinctive grain and wood that is not always red in colour. The name comes from the leaf colour in the fall. Red oak may be sold on the basis of 'northern', 'southern' and 'Appalachian'.

[Learn more about American red oak](#)

Yellow birch

Betula alleghaniensis

Preferring cool regions with high rainfall, yellow birch is mostly harvested from forests in Maine, New Hampshire, New York, Pennsylvania and Vermont. Generally straight grained with a fine uniform texture, the wood of yellow birch has a distinct difference between the sap which is white and the heartwood which is light reddish brown. It is heavy, hard and strong, with good bending qualities.

[Learn more about yellow birch](#)

Hard maple

Acer saccharum, Acer nigrum

Grown for both lumber and syrup, American hard maple is distinct from other maple species around the world, and renowned for its delicate colour, hardwearing nature, straight grain and fine finish. With creamy white sapwood and heartwood that can vary from light to dark reddish brown, hard maple darkens with exposure to light over time. It is widely used for applications where durability is important, such as flooring, worktops and furniture.

[Learn more about hard maple](#)

Cherry

Prunus serotina

American cherry is a fast-maturing hardwood species, with an ability to regenerate rapidly after forest fires. Cherry wood has a fine uniform grain, and a smooth texture. Its sapwood is creamy white; its heartwood varies from rich red to reddish brown and darkens on exposure to light. Easy to machine, mould, sand and stain, cherry wood is ideal furniture and fine joinery, and is a popular choice for doors, interior panelling and musical instruments.

[Learn more about cherry](#)

What is No.1 Common?

The *Wood for the Trees* exhibition has been created using No.1 Common grade timber. Timber and furniture industries across the world label lumber on the basis of a number of factors – in the U.S., these include the size of the cutting area, the number of knots or other natural characteristics in the surface, and variations in colour and grain. In other words, the grade reflects the percentage of ‘clear wood’ in a board of lumber. Number 1 Common – aka No.1C – hardwood generally comprises a similar amount of clear wood as upper grades but in smaller cuttings. Although this category of timber was originally created as the ‘cabinet grade’, specifically selected to be used in cabinetry, flooring or furniture parts, it is not commonly used in Europe, in favour of clearer grades of timber.