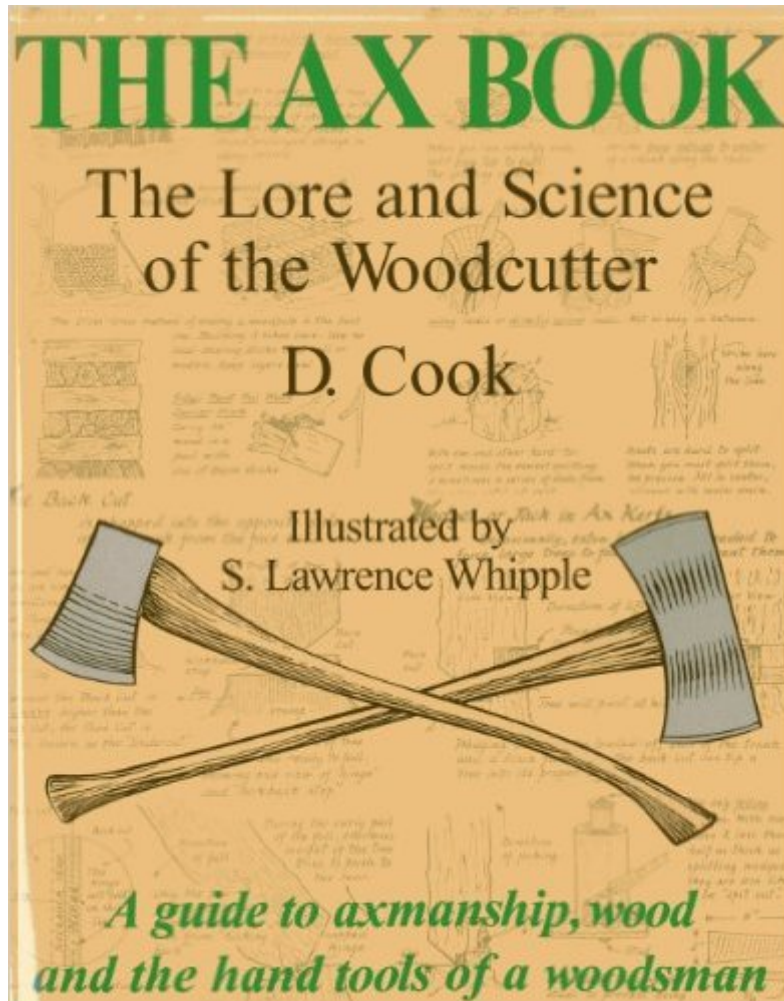


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The Ax Book: The Lore And Science Of The Woodcutter



Synopsis

The Ax Book is a thorough guide to cutting wood with hand tools. The author explains how to use various types of axes, hatchets, mauls, saws and wedges to take down trees and prepare firewood. In addition he shows every aspect of dealing with wood from the forest right to the hearth or stove.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I spent my youth chopping wood - and wish I'd had this book to read back then. As a collector who enjoys finding old axes and re-handling them, the material on handle geometry and fitting provides a detailed assessment that I don't think I've ever seen anywhere else. I believe that the modern reader is inclined to disbelief of some of Cook's claims when comparing speed of work between axes and chain saws. However, I suspect that Cook's claims are based on skill and fitness levels only seen nowadays in Lumberjack contest racers... Thinking about how fast those racers get through logs - I begin to think that Cook's statements may be legitimate, and if contest racers can do it, then with dedication (and a lot of calories) a person can actually get there, if they desire to. But overall, this is a book written by a person who enjoys and has developed a significant understanding of axemanship, at the far end of a lifetime of ax use. It is very seldom indeed that such a level of understanding for such an obscure and mostly forgotten craft, is recorded in print. As such, it is a great read, some of which is opinion (this is a craft, not a science, after all), but also provides a thought provoking and very thorough dissection of the tools. If you desire to do more than just "go chop wood" - this book will help you to make decisions about the size and shape of the ax, how the

edge is shaped and sharpened, possible install or replacement of the handle, with consideration of handle length and shape - and then provides detailed coverage of how to go about getting the wood itself from a tree into the needed size and shape for your stove. And, lest I forget, it also provides a thorough and clear instruction on how to use and maintain crosscut saws.

I am not a lumberjack nor do I plan to become one, but I do fell an occasional tree and wanted to know how to do it better with a variety of tools. While the book focuses on doing so with an axe, the author also covers other methods and will indicate which is best under different circumstances. The author's knowledge and expertise obviously came from growing up and using an axe extensively in an era when the axe was the primary tool used for woodcutting, but he has not limited the text to only the use of an axe. I'm amazed that he appears to have left few details out, large or small. Only someone who had experienced getting a wedge "spit out" of a kerf would think of recommending methods to prevent it. This book is about performing difficult, dangerous timbering tasks more efficiently and safely. The prose is engaging and the illustrations well drawn and helpful. Yes it is from the past and about mostly by-gone methods. But given the global instability and cost of a chainsaw's most critical resource, fuel, the methods are certainly good to have in a man's toolkit, even today. Besides, few things feel better than bringing a good sized hardwood to the ground, just where you wanted it, with nothing but sharp steel, muscle and a little practical physics. Regardless of whether or not you do it frequently, having the confidence and skills to be able to, makes this book well worth its price.

This book is packed with information. You learn about the care and use of the ax, along with proper tree felling, limbing and splitting techniques. And a little ax history. There is information on tree characteristics, other tools needed in the forest and some info on saws. If you are a woodsman or just cut and split your own firewood the knowledge gained will help you in your task. The book is easy to read and understand with diagrams that are well done and informative.

This is an revision of "Keeping Warm With an Ax: A Woodcutter's Handbook", from 1981. It claims to be a revision, but I don't see much difference between the two. Whatever may have been added or deleted seems to be minimal from a comparison of random pages. Just be aware that it is a update so you don't end up buying both it and Keeping Warm With an Ax: A Woodcutter's Handbook like I did. It is still one of the best books, if not the best, on selecting and using an axe that I have read among the limited number of books on the axe. Cook's emphasis on safety is well presented, with a

concept of "frontal zone" as the area extending from one's feet forward at the width of the outsides of the feet, with objects to be cut to the left or right of this zone. Use of a frontal zone will mean that any swing that misses or ricochets will miss the user because it is already past the user. This is a concept that I had not seen before, yet makes much sense for safety. I strongly recommend this book. In the very limited genre on axes, it is a gem well worth reading and studying. In fact, I have bought several copies to give to my axe-using friends and relatives.

Throughout recorded time, the ax has been a principle tool for carving out from the wilderness the homes, farms, and roads so necessary to the advance of civilization. Even today, those who use chainsaws and other power equipment still need to be familiar with the hand tools of their craft. In many situations, only a hand-ax will suffice for the felling of trees, the rough shaping of lumber, the creation of firewood, and clearing out the nooks and crannies of forested areas for other purposes -- including the planting of new trees. Cook's The Ax Book is an ideal "how to" manual of instruction enhanced with the illustrations of Whipple to provide what is simply the best introductory guide to the subject available to readers today. The Ax Book is a "must" for anyone needing to use a hand ax for any purpose, under any circumstances.

I have used an ax for years, and have heard stories from my family that included the ax, but I learned so much from this book I couldn't believe it. any one who uses a ax should have this owners manual.

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