

# Wood Pellet Buying Guide



Produced by the Vermont Department of  
Forests, Parks & Recreation

## How to dispose of pellet bags

Empty pellet bags can be recycled at:

Additional Recyclables Collection Center  
540 N. Main Street, Barre  
<http://www.cvsmd.org/arcc.html>

Depending on the specific type of plastic material, you may be able to bring your bags to a Take-Back drop off at a nearby supermarket. Find out more: [www.plasticfilmrecycling.org](http://www.plasticfilmrecycling.org)

In lieu of recycling, many pellet users repurpose bags as garbage bags, giving them a second life and displacing other plastic waste.

## Hey - thanks!

When Vermonters heat with fossil fuels, 78 cents of every fuel dollar leaves the region. When we heat with locally sourced wood fuels, the opposite is true! Wood is our local, renewable, sustainable fuel source - switching to regionally sourced pellets means you'll be displacing fossil fuels, creating jobs for your neighbors, retaining local wealth, and helping to keep forests as forests. That should make you feel warm and cozy twice over!



## For More Information

Emma Hanson  
Wood Energy Coordinator  
Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation  
Phone: 802.622.4187  
Email: [Emma.Hanson@vermont.gov](mailto:Emma.Hanson@vermont.gov)



Follow **VHeatsLocal** on Facebook and Instagram for updates on incentives, policy, tips, and general wood heating fun.



## What are wood pellets?

Wood pellets are small granules made of compressed wood fibers and make excellent fuel. They are a refined heating fuel engineered to have high energy density and low ash and moisture content. Pellets are typically made from by-products like sawdust and woodchips from the wood manufacturing industry but are also made from low-grade wood sourced from local timber harvesting operations.

Wood heat provides markets for low grade wood, which is essential to the practice of sustainable forest management.

## Bags vs Bulk

Wood pellets are available both in 40lbs bags and in loose bulk form. Numerous companies in the region own and operate specialized bulk pellet delivery trucks that can deliver bulk pellets to customers by the ton.

Pellet boilers all use bulk pellets. Pellet stove users tend to use bagged pellets, but both options can work great.

Bulk pellets are less expensive by the ton, but require some sort of storage bin (see more in Storage). Bagged pellets require no infrastructure, but some users dislike the leftover plastic bags.





## What makes a good pellet?

The best measures of pellet quality are:

- Heat output
- Ash content
- Moisture content

**Heat Output** is measured in BTU/lb. Many retailers will display the “moisture-free BTU value,” which is substantially higher than the “as received BTU value.” However, the “moisture-free” value isn’t very useful for you, since it represents the heat output of a pellet after all the moisture is removed. So, the best fuels have an as received BTU value of 8000-8400, or a moisture-free BTU value of 8200-8800.

**Ash content** is measured as a percentage of weight and should be at most 1%. In other words: when you burn a 40-pound bag of pellets, you should have less than 6 oz. of ash (or about 3/4 cup). The less ash you have, the less often you have to clean your stove.

**Moisture content** is also measured as a percentage. A premium pellet must have less than 8% moisture, but higher quality fuels will have 6.5% or less. If the moisture content of your pellets is too high, you may notice that your fuel takes longer to ignite when you first fire up your stove.

## Hardwood vs Softwood - does it matter?

Unlike firewood, where hardwood is widely preferred, very high quality pellets may be made of all softwood, all hardwood, or a mix of the two. It comes down to personal preference and what burns best in your stove or boiler. Softwood pellets generally have higher heat output and lower ash, but it’s a great idea to experiment at first.

## Pellet Delivery

**Delivery of bulk orders of bagged pellets and bulk loose pellets are available throughout Vermont from the following companies:**

### Bourne’s Energy

[www.bournesenergy.com](http://www.bournesenergy.com)  
Morrisville, VT (800) 326-8763

### Vermont Renewable Fuels

[www.vermontrenewablefuels.com](http://www.vermontrenewablefuels.com)  
Manchester Center, VT (802) 362-3180

### Lyme Green Heat

[www.lymegreenheat.com](http://www.lymegreenheat.com)  
Lyme, NH (603) 359-8837

### Maine Energy Systems

[www.maineenergysystems.com](http://www.maineenergysystems.com)  
Bethel, ME (207) 824-7355

### Sandri

[www.sandri.com/renewable-energy](http://www.sandri.com/renewable-energy)  
Greenfield, MA (413) 223-1142

### Vincent’s Heating

[www.vincentsh heating.com](http://www.vincentsh heating.com)  
Poland, NY (315) 826-3864

## Pellet Mills

Vermont has only one pellet mill in the state, Vermont Wood Pellet in North Clarendon. They make a premium softwood pellet that is available in bulk from Bourne’s Energy.

There are many high quality pellets available from mills throughout New England, offering Vermonters a variety of great regionally sourced options that support the working forests of Vermont and our neighbors.

## Pellet Storage Options

### Bagged Pellets

If possible, store bags indoors in a dry area free from flooding, mold, and excessive humidity.

If indoor storage is not an option, a shed, porch or breezeway is your best bet.



If no structure is available, don’t fret. Your pellets will be fine outside so long as they are kept dry. Elevate them off the ground by stacking them on pallets and securely cover with a tarp.

### Bulk Loose Pellets

Indoor and outdoor bulk storage options include agricultural silos, fabric bags, and wooden and metal bins.

Owners of automated pellet boilers will work with their installer to select an option that will be installed as part of an overall package.

Stove users can also utilize bulk pellets to save money and reduce plastic waste. Many options can be set up so that you can fill a bucket that you then pour into the hopper. It’s even possible to engineer an auger to feed pellets to a spigot right next to your stove!

