

http://www.woodweb.com/knowledge_base/Value_of_Walnut_Sawlogs.html

What is a nice standing walnut tree worth as saw timber?

That depends on many factors. January 11, 2007

Question

I have 4 black walnut trees on my property they are all over 62" around at 4.5 feet off the ground. They are around 100' tall with straight trunks and no low branches. Can anyone give a ballpark estimate on value? I live in PA and would consider selling them if they would bring a significant amount.

Forum Responses

(Sawing and Drying Forum)

From contributor B:

Here in Virginia walnut was going for mixed hardwood prices the last time I checked. The possible exceptions would be a private sale or if they include veneer logs. Walnut has much more value as sawn lumber.

From contributor J:

As mentioned, the value of boards is much higher than on the stump. In fact, generally the value increases with each processing step, i.e., when it is felled, bucked, hauled to the road, hauled to the mill, rough sawn, kiln dried, and surfaced. One thing is until the wood is revealed the buyer is taking a gamble. How do you know if that 62" tree has a 30" rotted center?

You might be disappointed in what you can get for your logs at a sawmill. For example, before I got my own mill I hauled three nice 12'+ red oak logs to a commercial sawmill. They offered me \$75, hardly worth the effort of hauling. That said, I've heard stories of some very high value for large prime walnut logs so it would certainly be worth checking further.

From contributor G:

The comment on potential for metal in the butt logs is valid. Log buyers are accustomed to hearing about log size in terms of the small end diameter (not circumference at chest height) in inches and length in feet.

Assume 1" of diameter decrease per 8' of tree height and convert the small end of the log to diameter in inches (twice the radius) using: $\text{circumference} = 6.28 \times \text{radius}$. EX: assume that your 62" DBH tree is 60" at 16' above the ground. The radius = $60" / 6.28$ or 9.55" so the small end diameter is about 19". Knowing this you can use the log volume calculator on this website to calculate the number of board feet in the log.

If a butt walnut log of that small end diameter is free of defects (metal, split, knots, bumps, discoloration, holes, rot etc.) it is big enough to sell as a walnut veneer log and consequently should not be sold as a walnut saw log.

The first thing that I would do in your situation is more research. Get a PA state forester to visit

and give you his opinion of the trees. He will probably not be allowed to talk about dollars but he should be able to give an opinion on the relative quality of the trees. The next thing that I would do is talk to some loggers to find out who they sell their veneer logs to and get some current prices for walnut logs delivered to the log yard.

There is potentially a lot of value in the butt logs of your trees which can be destroyed if the trees are damaged during felling. If you do decide to sell the trees and you do not have a lot of experience in timber felling it would be worth hiring a professional faller to do the work.

Walnut is currently in high demand. If you can locate some potential buyers ask them how many board feet of walnut it would take for them to come to your property and give you bids on the felled and yarded trees. If you have enough volume to execute this type of sale, do not cut the trees up into logs. Pull them out tree length (cut off at 8" or below the first big limb) and advise bidders that they are allowed to make marks on the yarded trees but no cuts because the next bidder may have wanted to cut the trees up differently depending upon his markets.

Unless they are of exceptional size and quality, most buyers will not send a buyer to bid on just 4 trees. It would help generate interest in your sale if you could add more volume to it. Currently the highest value species are walnut, hard maple and cherry. Can you add any good quality hard maple or cherry trees to your sale?

Bottom line: you seem to have some idea of the number of dollars that it will take for you to part with your walnut trees. If after costs are subtracted your expectations are not met and the trees are healthy, let them grow. Demand for high quality walnut is not decreasing.

From contributor W:

If I were buying 4 walnut trees from you, I would first assess if they are yard trees that are likely to be full of metal. If they are not yard trees and they are as large as you say, I would offer you the same price as the highest value hardwood saw timber is bringing on the local market. For example, in Georgia, high quality red oak and ash are bringing about \$35 - \$40/ton on the stump.

These two species bring the highest prices in the local market. Since there is no market for walnut in the area (too few trees available), offering the same price as the saw logs that are commanding the highest price is more than fair. On the Doyle scale, that is about \$300/MBF. If you are in the Northeast or the Midwest, the price to match the highest value hardwoods selling in the area might be double that, approaching \$100/ton or \$800/MBF on the stump.

Remember, in addition to the cost of the trees on the stump, the buyer still has to pay for the cost of logging and haul, which can be as much as the price you get on the stump. As mentioned in a previous post, you will get more if you convert the trees to lumber, and then sell the lumber.

However, then you will bear the cost to log the trees, to saw the trees, to stack the green lumber, suffer the drying losses, handle each board several times, and store the lumber. Don't under-estimate how much work that is. So selling the trees on the stump at the same price the best selling hardwoods are bringing in your area is a fair price if someone else has to do all the

work to produce the lumber. You could more than double the value if you did all that work yourself and could possibly sell the air dried walnut lumber for \$2.00 to \$3.00 per board foot average. But if you do that, be sure and buy a good sawmill, hire a good helper, build some good sheds to dry the lumber in, buy a good tractor or fork lift, several good pairs of gloves, and some good back-pain medicine.

From contributor H:

I was curious so I checked in Saw Log Bulletin to which I subscribe. The listing PA mills are paying from 50/MBF - 3000/MBF. Differential is due to variations in size and quality. It has been correctly pointed out to you that logs are sized by the diameter inside the bark on the small end. Your circumference at BH would translate to a DBH of 19.75" Subtract for normal taper to 16' and for bark and it will be a stretch to call them 18" saw logs.