

Paint on Alder (for Distressing)



Material Attributes

CORE MATERIALS

- Columbia offers Paint on Alder for Distressing in two species: Clear Alder and Knotty Alder. Both are lightweight, moderately soft hardwoods with medium density and a moderately open grain structure.
- Alder's relative softness makes it an intentional choice when the design vision calls for weathering, marring, or character marks. It is the preferred substrate for distressed paint finishes where a lived-in, authentic aesthetic is desired.
- Unlike Paint on Maple, where Premium Woodfiber Board is used for center panels to ensure a smooth finish, Alder itself is used for all center panels.
- Clear Alder: smoother texture, with subtle grain and occasional pin knots or mineral streaks.
- Knotty Alder: adds rustic charm with closed and void knots, pitch pockets, worm tracks, and natural irregularities.

PAINTED FINISH

- Columbia's high-performance, low-VOC, post-catalyzed enamel provides superior durability, easier maintenance, and a smoother appearance.
- Post-catalyzed finishes, featuring extensive cross-linked molecular bonding and controlled curing, are more resistant to staining, scratching, denting, and moisture than lower-quality paint finishes, ensuring that the integrity of the paint surface is maintained with normal use and proper care. It's important to note that any paint finish can be compromised under extreme conditions, neglect, or improper care.
- Formulated to minimize the effects of UV light exposure, which include fading and yellowing.
- Glazes and specialty finishes bring out Alder's natural character, emphasizing the depth of its grain, knots, and hand-applied distressing for a timeworn effect.
- When painting Knotty Alder, knots and grain absorb paint differently, producing natural highlights, shadows, and tonal variations that reinforce the species' authenticity.



Grain Characteristics of Clear and Knotty Alder

- Clear Alder is straight-grained with occasional subtle waves, small pin knots, and mineral streaks.
- Knotty Alder is also largely straight-grained but with greater irregularity near knots. It features closed and void knots (no open gaps through the door), mineral streaks, small cracks, bird pecks, and worm holes—all considered natural and not defects.
- Both Clear and Knotty Alder showcase natural variation that can subtly telegraph through painted finishes. Paint lays smooth across the surface, but underlying knots, grain patterns, and occasional checks or dents may remain visible. The result is a finish with warmth, depth, and intentional imperfection—distinctly different from the flawless, uniform look achieved on Maple or engineered substrates.

Color of Clear and Knotty, and Paint Color Integrity

- Clear Alder ranges from light tan to medium brown, with undertones of yellow-brown or pink. Knotty Alder shares these tones but exhibits broader variation, from pale honey to dark brown and rust. Knots may appear dark brown to nearly black, often with red or golden undertones.
- When painted, the knots and grain of Knotty Alder interact with the finish in unique ways, creating soft highlights, shadows, and subtle hints of knot coloration that emphasize the species' natural authenticity. Even in Clear Alder, differences in grain absorption can create slight tonal variation. While paint conceals the wood's base color (except in areas of rub-through distressing), these absorption patterns contribute to subtle shifts in tone, adding depth and dimension to the finish.
- Columbia's post-catalyzed enamel finishes maintain excellent color integrity over time with minimal impact from UV exposure, though batch variations may still occur. Exposure to smoke or other airborne contaminants is not considered normal use and may impact color appearance.

Hardness and Durability

- Both Clear Alder and Knotty Alder have a Janka hardness rating of 590—much softer than Maple (1450).
- Alder's natural softness makes it the perfect choice for distressing, inviting character to build over time. Everyday marks and dings don't detract—they enhance the finish, adding to its aged, lived-in charm.
- For harder, more resilient painted cabinetry, Columbia recommends Paint on Maple or Paint on Premium Woodfiber Board.

Premium Woodfiber Finishing Properties

- Alder is exceptionally versatile, welcoming paint and specialty finishes with ease thanks to its open grain. Its natural softness makes it ideal for distressing—whether hand-applied or gained through everyday living—revealing an authentic, timeworn character.
- With specialty finishes like glazes, the depth of its knots, cracks, and natural markings are beautifully accentuated.
- Like all hardwoods, Alder naturally expands and contracts with changes in humidity and temperature. This movement may create small hairline fractures at joints—an inherent characteristic of real wood that speaks to its authenticity.

Aesthetic Qualities

- Clear Alder brings a smooth, refined canvas with just a touch of warmth and character, perfect for specialty paint applications.
- Knotty Alder, by contrast, embraces a distinctly rustic spirit—displaying knots and variation that create heritage-inspired, down-to-earth interiors.
- Offering greater durability and stain acceptance than Knotty Pine, Knotty Alder delivers authenticity with strength.
- Together, Clear and Knotty Alder give designers the flexibility to craft painted cabinetry with genuine personality—from softly distressed elegance to richly rustic charm.

