FIELD GUIDE · NO. 06

Common Tinder Materials

Good tinder ignites easily and burns long enough to light your kindling.



FROM THE BOOK

1. Tinder is the first layer of a fire: it must catch a flame easily and burn long enough to ignite the kindling above it.
2. Natural tinder includes dry grass, pine needles, cedar bark, birch bark, fine twigs, dry leaves, cattail fluff, and feather sticks made from dry wood.
3. Prepared tinder is worth carrying: commercial fire starters, cotton balls coated with petroleum jelly, dryer lint only if it is free of synthetic fibers, wax-coated tinder, and fatwood.
4. Dry material matters. Wood and tinder taken from damp ground are harder to light. A few ounces of prepared tinder take little space and can save time when natural materials are wet.
5. Before you strike a match, gather enough tinder, plenty of kindling, and larger firewood, build your fire lay, and keep additional fuel within reach.
6. Carry more than one way to start a fire. A disposable lighter is simple but can fail or run out of fuel. Waterproof matches are an excellent backup, and a ferrocerium rod continues to work after it has gotten wet, once it is dried off.

PRACTICE IT

Pack a small tin of prepared tinder you actually use, then practice lighting a cotton ball or commercial starter and transferring the flame to kindling in a safe, permitted fire ring.