

## Charred Wood Object Card

Strange as it may seem, many otherwise perishable materials (such as wood, clay plaster, and sometimes fragile bone) are preserved for archeologists to find because they burned. Wood charcoal – most often recovered from burned house timbers, hearths, or hearth sweepings thrown in trash pits – offers the opportunity for radiocarbon ( $C^{14}$ ) dating. The  $C^{14}$  dating method can be used only on materials that were once alive. This technique produces an absolute date, expressed in a range of years (for example, 640-480 B.C.) Only a few laboratories in the world have the sophisticated equipment necessary for processing radiocarbon samples, and the method is expensive.

The structure of wood is sometimes preserved in larger chunks, despite burning. Plant specialists can then identify the type of trees that Native Americans used.

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