

Quality is Foremost

The appearance of the surface of a culm should not be the basis for selection. Many canes have water-spots or dark areas which, in part, remain visible in the finished rod. On the other hand, cosmetic blemishes alone shouldn't cause you to reject a culm, for it would be much better to build a rod that casts well and has cosmetic flaws, than to build a visually-perfect rod from a culm containing an insufficient layer of power fibers! It is necessary to watch for holes in the bamboo, however, since most of these will indicate insect damage and may render the culm unusable.



The upper culm shows some small dark spots and stripes caused by water and insects. The lower culm has a perfect surface.



A leaf scar on a culm is not a problem. Only one strip needs to be discarded after splitting, leaving the remainder of the culm usable.

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Another technique for evaluating the quality of the bamboo is a breakage test. You take a piece of bamboo about 5/16 inches wide by 8 inches long and break it in the middle. The quality of individual power fibers can be seen in the break, and you can quickly determine if the quality is adequate. Poor material breaks easily, showing only a few long fibers, and the break itself will be localized. A strip of suitable material, however, breaks slowly and over a wider area, showing many, long fibers that spring out, dense and brittle. Be careful: You can easily hurt yourself on the splayed-out fibers.



Break-test: To be sure of the results, two strips are broken. High quality strips are seen on the left, revealing broadly-splintered fibers. The strips in the middle and on the right are of lower quality.