

EXOTIC SPECIES



-MAHOGANY,- -GENUINE- SWIETENIA MACROPHYLLA

Family:

Meliaceae, the mahogany family.



ORIGIN:

Southern Mexico, south to Columbia, Venezuela and parts of the upper Amazon and its tributaries in Peru, Bolivia and Brazil. Plantations have been established within its natural range and also elsewhere.

OTHER COMMON NAMES:

Honduras mahogany, bigleaf mahogany, American mahogany, true mahogany, caoba and acajou.

THE TREE:

Genuine mahogany is one of the most impressive species in the rain forests of tropical America, growing to heights of 150 ft. or more with a trunk diameter of 6 ft. It has a clear bole from 60 to 80 ft. above its majestically buttressed base.

APPEARANCE:

The heartwood is extremely variable, ranging in color from light tan to salmon pink to reddish brown then deepening with age to a deep rich red or brown and is clearly demarcated from the yellowish or whitish sapwood. The texture also varies from rather fine to coarse and the grain is straight to roey, wavy or curly, often with an attractive figure.

DENSITY:

Due to its extreme variability in terms of density, it can be as soft as yellow poplar or harder than most red oaks. Average reported specific gravity varies from 0.39 to 0.65 (ovendry weight/green volume), equal to an air-dried weight of 29 to 50 pcf. Janka hardness is 800 pounds of force.

DRYING & SHRINKAGE:

The wood can be air seasoned and kiln dried easily without appreciable warping or checking and is one of the most stable of all commercially important cabinetry woods. Average reported shrinkage values (green to ovendry) are 3.0% radial, 4.1% tangential and 7.8% volumetric.

WORKING PROPERTIES:

Genuine mahogany is one of the finest cabinetry woods in the world with outstanding working characteristics, cutting, sanding, shaping and turning excellently. Figured or coarse textured material might require filling to ensure a smooth finish. It is very easy to finish and takes an excellent polish. It also slices into fine veneer. Possible adverse reactions from the dust include dermatitis, respiratory problems, giddiness, furunculosis and vomiting.

DURABILITY:

It has excellent weathering properties and is durable in resistance to brown-rot and white-rot fungus but is only moderately resistant to dry-wood termites and is susceptible to attack by marine borers.

USES:

Uses include fine furniture, cabinetmaking, interior trim, paneling, fancy veneers, musical instruments, boat building, pattern making, turnery and carving.

AVAILABILITY:

Genuine mahogany is currently readily available and moderately priced but due to failure in efforts to grow it on a plantation basis we can anticipate a gap in availability that may be decades in duration.

