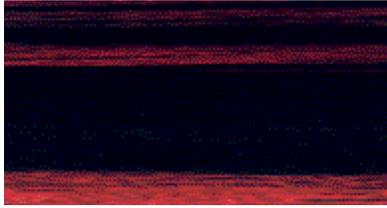


Ebony - *Diospyros ebenum*



Tropical. Height 70`. Trunk diameter 3`. Distribution throughout the tropical zone of the entire globe. Ebony is the common name for the tree genus *Diospyros* which contains some 300 species. The ones most associated with the black colored rare wood are African ebony, East Indian ebony, Macassar ebony and Nigerian ebony discussed here. Ebony can be found in the Philippines, East Indies, India, Sri Lanka and Madagascar, as well as throughout Africa, Central America and South America. Over the centuries ebony has become increasingly hard to find and hard to harvest. Today it is sometimes extracted from more difficult terrain by helicopter. A temperate zone ebony (*Diospyros virginiana*) is found in the United States. It is called persimmon and is valued for its fruit rather than its wood.

All ebony carries the prized black colored heartwood in the center of its trunk. Some species are darker than others. Ceylonese ebony has the darkest, most dense and uniform black color. It is found in Sri Lanka. Another dark ebony is the pure coal black specie from West Africa. It is believed that ebony gets its deep black color from deposits of tannins. A hard gum fills the heartwood fibers making it black and brittle. Other ebonyes are dark brown or black with pale brown, yellow, red or gray streaks. The grain pattern of all ebony is very tight, close and indistinct. Upon close inspection a very subtle ray pattern can be noted. Fact is, this extremely dense wood will dull almost all equipment and is often best worked with metalworking tools. It finishes smooth and has a beautiful sheen when highly polished.



Due to its brittle hard nature, its tendency to split when drying and its difficulty to mill, ebony is almost always used as accent components in small pieces, on furniture, sculpture, musical instruments and architectural elements. Its black color is an important addition to fine furniture design, ornamental work, fancy goods, marquetry and inlaid work. It is used in turnery and in accessories such as drawer handles, tool handles, brush backs and cutlery. The traditional use of ebony in musical instruments is as finger boards on violins and, of course, the black keys on pianos. Imagine sitting down to a Victorian piano built with black

ebony and white ivory keys encased in Brazilian rosewood!