

Mahogany - *Swietenia Macrophylla*



"New World" mahogany. Tropical. Wide buttressed trunk base growing straight up 60 to 85 feet high before branching out to form the rain forest canopy. Distribution from Mexico south through Central America to Brazil and Peru. "New World" mahogany is one of the two true mahoganies. The other one is *Khaya ivorensis* (African Mahogany). The third true mahogany, *Swietenia mahogany* (Cuban mahogany) is not available due to its scarcity and to trade restrictions. Philippine mahogany is not a true mahogany. It is of the genus *Shorea* and is sold in the industry as "Lauan".

The heavyweight of all woods, mahogany is one of the most valuable timber trees. The wood of "New World" mahogany varies in color from light red or pale tan to a rich dark red or deep golden brown, depending on country of origin. It is generally straight grained but is prized for its figures which include stripe, roe, curly, blister, fiddleback, and mottle. It is extremely strong, hard, stable and decay resistant. African mahogany is coarser in texture and has less strength than its South American cousin. It has a tendency to warp but seasons rapidly and is stable after it dries. Its color ranges from pale pink to dark reddish brown.



Mahogany rates among the top twelve furniture woods in the world. Due to the immense size of the tree it is readily available in large widths, thicknesses and lengths of lumber, and as veneer. Its rich warm color and mellow texture, which finishes, stains and polishes to a beautiful natural luster, makes it the first choice for premier cabinetry and architectural grade paneling and interiors. Popular in the '50's, mahogany is making a comeback due to the new attraction to the "red" woods. Mahogany works well with very sharp hand and machine tools. Its outstanding technical qualities make it the wood of choice for pattern making. Mahogany is not cheap but the price varies widely depending on grade, color, figures, and place of origin. Besides its use for fine jewelry, decorative

veneers, interiors and pattern making mahogany is used in shipbuilding and for fine boat interiors. It is also used for art objects and other precision woodwork such as printer's blocks, pianos, musical instruments and instrument cases.