

Caoba



↑
max. 60 metres
∅
max. 2.5 metres

Occurrence

The caoba tree, which is known for its mahogany wood, is native to tropical and subtropical Central America and tropical South America. It grows in a variety of soils, from loamy-sandy and fertile to acidic soils.

Significance

The wood, which is in high demand worldwide, is traded as precious wood and is therefore very valuable. In addition, resin can be extracted from the bark and oil from the seeds.

Threats

The wood of the mahogany tree is particularly popular and therefore often overused. The popularity of mahogany wood endangers its survival, as it grows slowly and only forms its first seeds after 15-20 years.

At ForestFinance

The caoba tree grows on our fincas in Panama in the regions of Chiriquí, Veraguas and Darién.

Characteristics

Leaves

The caoba tree's leathery, almost 14 cm long leaves grow alternately and have a shiny dark green colour.

Bark

The bark of the young caoba tree is smooth and light grey. Older trees have a ribbed and scaly bark with a greyish dark brown shade.

Fruits

The woody capsule is about the size of a fist with a length of 15-20 cm and a diameter of 7-10 cm. A tree can bear up to 1,000 fruits with 35-60 seeds each.

Flowers

The light yellow, paniced inflorescences are 8-13 cm long and bloom at the end of the dry season in March to May.

Caoba

FAMILY MELIACEAE

GENUS SWIETENIA

SPECIES SWIETENIA MACROPHYLLA



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Description of wood

The light yellow and grey thin sapwood comprises a reddish to deep brown-red heartwood. The caoba tree grows alternately, which makes the wood extremely stable. It is particularly sun and rain resistant and has a high resistance to insects and fungi.



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DENSITY

0.44-0.6 g/cm³

JANKA HARDNESS

800 lbf

History

In 1502 Columbus saw his first mahogany Mayan canoe in Central America. He was quite excited about the wood and brought it with him to Europe. Mahogany quickly established itself in shipbuilding and the demand increased rapidly.



Use

Nowadays the precious mahogany wood is particularly popular in the art and furniture carpentry. By treatment with oil, lacquer or wax it receives a shimmering gloss and is weather resistant at the same time.



Trade

Due to the high prices that can be achieved with mahogany wood on the world market, the trees are often cut down illegally. The caoba tree mainly grows in natural forests, where illegal logging is difficult to control.



The caoba tree is also known as genuine mahogany. It is sold under the commercial names big-leaf mahogany or mahogany.

