



Timber Team International A/S

Naverland 2
2600 Glostrup
Denmark

tel: +45 4344 3044
fax: +45 4344 2255

all@timberteam.com
www.timberteam.com



Ipé / Lapacho

Tabebuia spp.

Family: Bignoniaceae

Bethabara

Other Common Names: Amapa (Mexico), Cortez (Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica), Guayacan (Panama), Guayacan polvillo (Colombia), Flor Amarillo (Venezuela), Greenhart (Surinam), Madera negra (Ecuador), Tahuari (Peru), Ipe (Brazil), Lapacho negro (Paraguay, Argentina).

Distribution: Throughout continental tropical America and some of the Lesser Antilles. The tree grows on a variety of sites, from ridge tops to riverbanks and marsh forests.

The Tree: May grow to 140 to 150 ft in height with trunk diameters of 6 ft. Frequently to heights of 100 ft and diameters of 2 to 3 ft. Boles are clear to 60 ft and more, with or without buttresses.

The Wood:

General Characteristics: Heartwood olive brown to blackish, often with lighter or darker striping, often covered with a yellow powder; sharply demarcated from the whitish or yellowish sapwood. Texture fine to medium; luster low to medium; grain straight to very irregular; rather oily looking; without distinctive odor or taste.

Weight: Basic specific gravity (ovendry weight/green volume) 0.85 to 0.97; air- dry density 66 to 75 pcf.

Janka side hardness 3,060 lb for green material and 3,680 lb at 12% moisture content. Forest Products Laboratory toughness average for green and dry material is 404 in.-lb. (5/8-in. specimen).

Drying and Shrinkage: Generally reported to air-dry rapidly with only slight checking and warping. Kiln schedule T3-C1 is suggested for 4/4 stock. Shrinkage green to ovendry: radial 6.6%; tangential 8.0%; volumetric 13.2%. Movement after manufacture is rated as small.

Working Properties: Moderately difficult to work especially with hand tools; has a blunting effect on cutting edges, finishes smoothly except where grain is very roey The fine yellow dust produced in most operations may cause dermatitis in some workers.

Durability: Heartwood is very resistant to attack by decay fungi and termites; not resistant to marine borers. *T. guayacan* however, is reported to have good resistance in Panama waters.

Preservation: The wood is reported to be extremely resistant to preservation treatments.

Uses: Railroad cross ties, heavy construction, tool handles, turnery, industrial flooring, textile mill items, decorative veneers.

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Technology Transfer Fact Sheet



Center for Wood Anatomy Research

USDA Forest Service • Forest Products Laboratory • One Gifford Pinchot Drive • Madison, Wisconsin 53726-2398