



As a symbol of peace and longevity, olive trees have many claims to fame. Whether one's an advocate of Darwinism or the Bible's theory of creation, the olive has played an historical role. According to the Book of Genesis, a dove brought Noah an olive branch, symbolizing the end of the floods as well as God's peace with man. Otherwise, olive trees are believed to date back to prehistoric times. If you are looking for dramatic good looks, olivewood lumber and veneers have fit the bill since the days dinosaurs sought the olivewood trees' shade.

Olive trees are widely known for the olive fruit and oil they provide, but the trees do yield beautiful and usable lumber and veneer. Several species of olive trees provide commercial timber. The wood, often known as genuine olivewood, Mediterranean and European olive, comes from the species *Olea europaea*. The Olive (*Olea europaea*) is a species of small tree in the family Oleaceae, native to the coastal areas of the eastern Mediterranean region, from Lebanon, Syria and the maritime parts of Asia Minor and northern Iran at the south end of the Caspian Sea. Its fruit, the olive, is of major agricultural importance in the Mediterranean region as the source of olive oil.

Olea hochstetteri

East African Olive

Family: Oleaceae

Other Common Names: Olmasi, Ngwe (Tanzania), Musharagi (Kenya).

Distribution: Montane rain forests at elevations of 6,000 to 9,000 ft; common in Kenya and parts of Zaire but less frequent in Uganda and Tanzania.

The Tree: May reach a height of 80 to 100 ft, but is often smaller; bole rarely straight, heavily fluted, about 15 to 30 ft in length; trunk diameters 2 to 3 ft.

The Wood:

General Characteristics: Heartwood pale brown with irregular dark gray-brown streaks; sapwood up to 2 in. wide, pale yellow, clearly demarcated. Texture fine and even; grain straight or shallowly interlocked, figured; surface slightly oily.

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Weight: Basic specific gravity (ovendry weight/green volume) 0.72; air-dry density 55 pcf.

Mechanical Properties: (2-cm standard)

Moisture content Bending strength Modulus of elasticity Maximum crushing strength

(%) (Psi) (1,000 psi) (Psi)

Green (9) 15,300 1,980 7,080

12% 25,300 2,530 12,200

Janka side hardness 1,840 lb for green and 2,740 lb for dry material.

Drying and Shrinkage: Timber dries very slowly with a strong tendency to check and warp; honeycomb may develop in thick material if dried too rapidly. Kiln schedule T6-D2 is suggested for 4/4 stock and T3-D1 for 8/4. Shrinkage green to 12% moisture content: radial 4.0%; tangential 6.5%. Movement in service is rated as large.

Working Properties: Easy to saw when green, difficult to work by hand, a smooth clean finish is obtained in planing, excellent turning properties, moderate steam-bending properties.

Durability: Heartwood has low to moderate durability, susceptible to termite attack.

Preservation: Heartwood moderately resistant to preservative treatments; sapwood permeable.

Uses: Furniture, decorative veneer, turnery, decorative flooring, tool handles.

Additional Reading: (3), (6), (9)

M 150 282-3Logs are delivered to a sawmill in southern Nigeria. African mahogany (mostly *Khaya ivorensis*) is in high demand on overseas markets. Export of logs from this region, as well as from most other tropical areas, is being restricted.