



Many trees change color once they are cut but the tropical American tree called Purpleheart is especially famous for its chameleon-like quality. Purpleheart's heartwood is dull brown but when the wood is freshly cut and exposed to the air, it changes to a strikingly deep purple.

Peltogyne spp.

Purpleheart

Amaranth

**Family:** Leguminosae

**Other Common Names:** Palo morado (Mexico), Morado (Panama, Venezuela), Tananeo (Columbia), Koroboreli (Guyana), Purperhart (Surinam), Amarante (French Guiana), Pau roxo, Guarabu (Brazil), Violetwood (English trade).

**Distribution:** Center of distribution in the north-middle part of the Brazilian Amazon region; combined range of all species from Mexico through Central America and southward to southern Brazil.

**The Tree:** Trees grow to heights of 170 ft with diameters to 4 ft, but usually 1.5 to 3 ft; boles are straight, cylindrical, and clear 60 to 90 ft above buttresses up to 12 ft. high.

**The Wood:**

**General Characteristics:** Heartwood brown when freshly cut becoming deep purple upon exposure, eventually turning to a dark brown sharply demarcated from the off-white sapwood.

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Texture medium to fine; luster medium to high, variable; grain usually straight, sometimes wavy, roey, or irregular; without distinctive odor or taste.

**Weight:** Basic specific gravity (ovendry weight/green volume) varies with species from 0.67 to 0.91; air-dry density 50 to 66 pcf.

**Mechanical Properties:** (First set of data based on the 2-in. standard; second on the 2-cm standard; third on the 1-in. standard.)

Moisture content Bending strength Modulus of elasticity Maximum crushing strength

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

Green (75) 13,690 2,000 7,020

12% 19,220 2,270 10,320

Green (30) 21,000 2,560 9,250

15% 26,700 NA 12,200

12% (24) 30,900 3,460 14,500

Janka side hardness ranges from 1,860 lb to 3,920 lb at 12% moisture content. Forest Products Laboratory toughness at 12% moisture content ranges from 157 to 398 in.-lb. (5/8-in. specimen).

**Drying and Shrinkage:** Reports vary, from air-dries easily to moderately difficult; dries slowly to fairly rapidly; with almost no degrade to some warping and splitting Kiln schedule T6-D2 is suggested for 4/4 stock and T3-D1 for 8/4. Shrinkage green to ovendry: radial 3.2%; tangential 6.1%; volumetric 9.9%. Stability after manufacture or movement is rated as small.

**Working Properties:** Moderately difficult to work with either hand or machine tools, dulls cutters, exudes a gummy resin when heated by dull tools; slow feed rates and specially hardened cutters are suggested. Turns smoothly, easy to glue, and takes finishes well.

**Durability:** Heartwood is rated as highly durable in resistance to attack by decay fungi; very resistant to dry-wood termites; but little resistance to marine borers.

**Preservation:** Heartwood is reported to be extremely resistant to impregnation with preservative oils; sapwood is permeable.

**Uses:** Turnery, marquetry, cabinets, fine furniture, parquet flooring, tool handles, heavy construction, shipbuilding, many specialty items (billiard cue butts, chemical vats, carving).

**Additional Reading:** (24), (30), (46), (7,5)

M 150 282-3 Logs 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.

M 150 282-2 Band mills in Ghana are designed to handle logs 5 feet and more in diameter. Obeche or Wawa (*Triplochiton scleroxylon*) logs yield lumber favored for joinery and millwork.

M 150 273-14 In many areas of the tropics, fast-growing species are being introduced for future supplies of fuel wood and industrial wood. Batai (*Albizia falcataria*) is a favored plantation species in the Philippines.

M 150 273-13 *Shorea* spp. is still the major timber group harvested in Southeast Asia. With modern chain saws, fellers no longer need scaffolding to get above large buttresses.

M 150 281 Felling of white lauan or almon (*Shorea almon*) with axes in the early 1900s in the Philippines. Most hardwood plywood now imported into the USA is produced from species of *Shorea*.

[M 150 273-9 Plywood mill in San Jose, Costa Rica, produces rotary-cut veneers mostly from banak (*Virola* spp.) and crabwood or cedro macho (*Carapa guianensis*). Logs trucked in from the Caribbean coast.]

M 150 273-21 Mahot or Tauary (Couratari spp.) grows from Panama south to the Brazilian Amazon. Trunk diameters may exceed 4 feet above the stout buttresses. In tropical American moist forests, single species usually make up less than 5 percent of the stand volume.

M 150 273-18 Trees in the tropics yield not only wood but a wide array of gums, oil resins, tannins, edible fruits, medicinals, latex, fodder, and much more. The para rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) at the end of its tapping life is used to produce attractive wood suitable for furniture components.

M 150 272-14 Some European markets still prefer hand hewn greenheart (*Ocotea rodiaei*) for heavy marine construction. Work is being done on a river landing in Guyana.