

LOCAL NAMES

English (redwood,large fruited camwood,Gabon padouk,barwood,African padouk,African coralwood)

BOTANIC DESCRIPTION

Pterocarpus soyauxii is a tree 27-34 m tall; bole length up to 17 m, girth up to 3.3 m with an undivided stem. Bark reddish-grey, detaching in flakes, slash white, exuding a red gum.

Leaves compound, unarmed; leaflets 11-13, alternate, lateral leaflet veins crowded but disappearing before leaf margins.

Flowers in pyramidal panicles; calyx turbinate, upper 2 teeth more or less connate, vexillum orbicular or broad-ovate; stamens connate; style curved round towards the base.

Fruit an obliquely orbicular, compressed indehiscent pod, 6-9 cms with numerous prickly thorns.

Pterocarpus is based on the Greek words 'pteran' meaning a wing and, 'karpos' meaning 'fruit'.

BIOLOGY

The African coralwood is monoecious.

ECOLOGY

The tree is native to West Tropical Africa and occurs in mixed deciduous and evergreen forests. It requires much light and moist soils.

BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS

Mean annual temperature: 23 deg C

Mean annual rainfall: 1 500-1 700 mm

Soil type: Well drained soils.

DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION

Native: Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Nigeria

Exotic:



The map above shows countries where the species has been planted. It does neither suggest that the species can be planted in every ecological zone within that country, nor that the species can not be planted in other countries than those depicted. Since some tree species are invasive, you need to follow biosafety procedures that apply to your planting site.

PRODUCTS

Food: *P. soyauxii* leaves are eaten as vegetables and have a high ascorbic acid content even after cooking.

Timber: The wood commercially known as 'African padouk' (*P. osun* and *P. tinctorius* are also marketed under the same name) is of medium weight, very hard and durable, termite resistant, fading blood red in colour, impregnable with preservatives, difficult to plane, can be turned and polished. Used for walking sticks, canoe construction, buildings, wooden shovels, yam pestles and heavy furniture; pulping trials were satisfactory. There is an almost exclusive use of *P. soyauxii* timber for drums by African craftsmen because of its reputed high resonance qualities. Redwood is an important lumber export of Cameroon.

Tannin or dyestuff: Dye from the roots and heartwood is lumbered. Dye extracted by pounding bark in a mortar or in natural holes in rock, the pulverized material is then water moistened and molded for sale as cakes.

Medicine: Bark extracts are used in warding off animal skin parasites in ethnoveterinary practices. Antifungal properties are reported for this plant.

Other products: The pulverized bark is mixed with palm oil in making a pomade for use as a cosmetic.

SERVICES

Nitrogen fixing: *P. soyauxii* is nitrogen fixing

Other services: The pulverized wood is used as a fetish medicine in medicomagical rites.

TREE MANAGEMENT

In West Africa, *P. soyauxii* is readily propagated from fallen seeds, germination is fast and seedlings grow rather fast too, these are tended in forest until when ready for cutting. The tree requires much light. Stump regrowth is weak and uneconomical for dye production.

GERMPLASM MANAGEMENT

Seed storage behaviour orthodox.

PESTS AND DISEASES

The fungi *Coniophora cerebella*, *Merulius lacrymans*, *Polystictus versicolor* and *Poria vaporaria* have been reported on this tree.

FURTHER READING

Duke JA. 1981. *Caesalpinia spinosa*. In: Handbook of Legumes of World Economic Importance. Plenum Press, New York. Pp. 32-33.

Hong TD, Linington S, Ellis RH. 1996. Seed storage behaviour: a compendium. Handbooks for Genebanks: No. 4. IPGRI.

Oteng-Gyang K and Mbachu JI. 1987. Changes in the ascorbic acid content of some tropical leafy vegetables during traditional cooking and local processing. *Food Chemistry*. 23(1): 9-17.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Orwa C, A Mutua, Kindt R, Jamnadass R, S Anthony. 2009 *Agroforestry Database: a tree reference and selection guide version 4.0* (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/treedbs/treedatabases.asp>)