



Piratinera guianensis
syn. Brosimum guianensis

Family: Moraceae

Letterwood

Snakewood

Other Common Names: Cacique carey (Panama), Palo de oro (Venezuela), Burokoro, Tibicusi (Guyana), Letterhout (Surinam), Bois d'amourette (French Guiana), Gateado, Muirapenima (Brazil).

Distribution: Guianas, Trinidad, and the Amazon region; a rare to occasional tree.

The Tree: Unbuttressed small tree, up to 80 ft in height with trunk diameters of 12 to 20 in.; bole is cylindrical and clear for 40 to 50 ft.

The Wood:

General Characteristics: Heartwood dark red to reddish brown with irregular radial black markings or with black vertical stripes alone or in conjunction with the speckles; sapwood very thick, yellowish white, line of demarcation often irregular and not very sharp. Luster medium to high; texture fine and uniform; grain straight; odorless and tasteless.

Weight: Basic specific gravity (green volume/ovendry weight) 0.82 to 1.10; air- dry density 63 to 84 pcf.

Mechanical Properties: No strength values available but reported to be a strong hardwood that splits rather easily, heartwood is rather brittle.

Drying and Shrinkage: Should be dried carefully and in small pieces; shrinkage is reported to be rather high.

Working Properties: Works with difficulty because of hardness; turns well and takes a beautiful polish.

Durability: Heartwood very resistant to attack by decay fungi and dry-wood termites.

Preservation: No information available.

Uses: Inlay, turnery, fancy handles for cutlery, violin bows, walking sticks, drum sticks, butts of fishing rods.

Additional Reading: (46), (56), (72)

46. Longwood, F. R. 1962. Present and potential commercial timbers of the Caribbean. Agriculture Handbook No. 207. U.S. Department of Agriculture.

56. Record, S. J., and R. W. Hess. 1949. *Timbers of the new world*. Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn.

72. Vink, A. T. 1965. *Surinam timbers: A summary of available information with brief descriptions of the main species of Surinam*. Surinam Forest Service, Paramaribo.

From: Chudnoff, Martin. 1984. Tropical Timbers of the World. USDA Forest Service. Ag. Handbook No. 607.