



## WEST INDIAN MAHOGANY

(*Swietenis mahogani*)

In the timber trade the name is applied to several kinds of wood but to us in Jamaica it means either our native wood of that name or the Honduras mahogany which grow in large quantities in Belize. Ours is the original Mahogany, *Swietenis mahogani* which belongs to the West Indies and southern Florida, while the Honduras species is its very close relative *Swietenia macrophylla* from Mexico, Central America and northern South America.

This slow growing tree can get as tall as 20 m. The bark is greyish or brown and frequently flakes. The trunk is grey and straight and sometimes has buttress roots. The leaves are compound measuring 10-30 cm long and are shiny and dark green above and lighter below. The flowers are small, fragrant and greenish-yellow or cream coloured. The ovoid, brown fruit range between 7 and 12.5 cm long and has a rough outer coat.

Much of our most prized furniture is made of it and in many old churches and houses not only the furniture but the doors, the window casements and even the floors sometimes are made of mahogany. The bark is used as a dye for staining floors. Three hundred years ago, we would have been well acquainted with the tree as well as the wood but due to over harvesting only a few are left in the natural woodlands mainly in the central and western parishes. Most of the wood used today is imported from Central America.

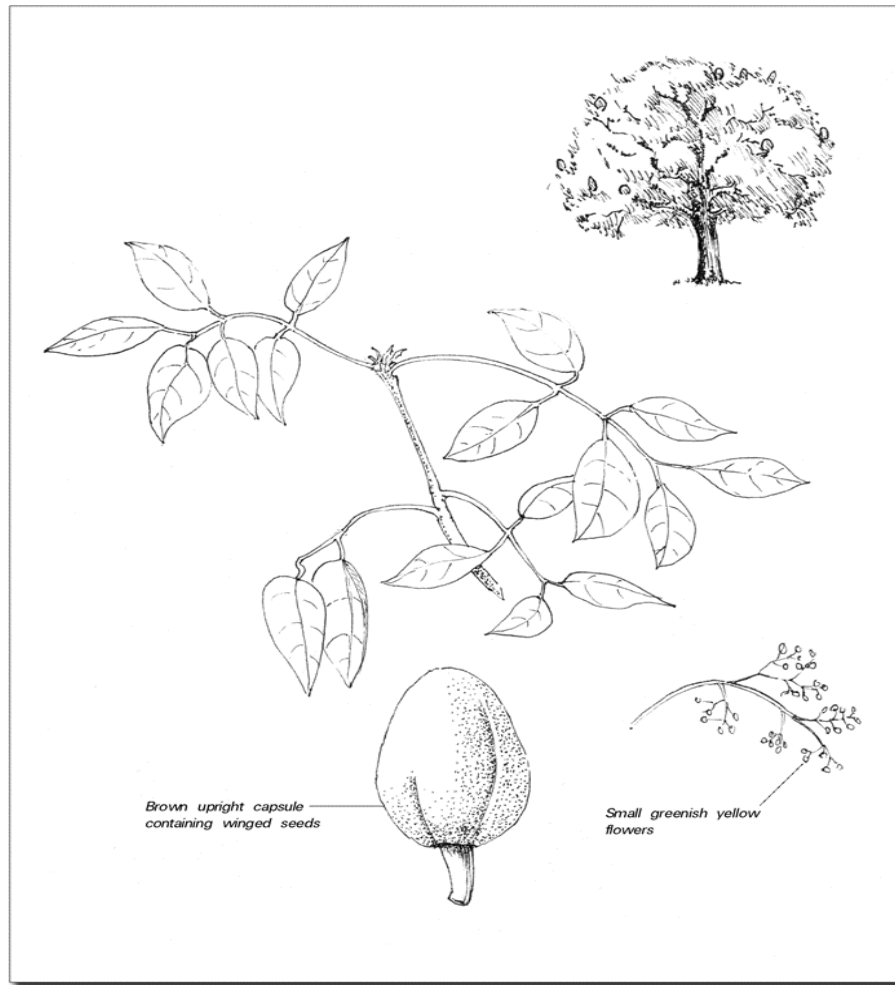
The tree can grow at altitudes from sea level to 900 m, but is frequently found between 150 m and 500 m.



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Family: <b>Meliaceae</b>	Species: <i>Swietenia mahogani</i>	Author: (L.) Jacq.
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Height: 20m	Habitat: Sea level-900m	Persistence: Evergreen
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