

Swietenia

Scientific Classification

Kingdom: Plantae
Order: Sapindales
Family: Meliaceae
Genus: Swietenia Jacq.



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Plant profile

Swietenia is a genus of trees in the chinaberry family, Meliaceae. It occurs natively in the Neotropics, from southern Florida, the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America south to Bolivia. The genus is named for Dutch-Austrian physician Gerard van Swieten (1700-1772).

Uses

The genus is famed as the supplier of mahogany, at first yielded by *Swietenia mahagoni*, a Caribbean species, which was so extensively used locally and exported that its trade ended by the 1950s. These days almost all mahogany is yielded by the mainland species, *Swietenia macrophylla* although no longer from its native locations due to the restrictions set by CITES (see following. As a timber, both *Swietenia macrophylla* and *Swietenia mahagoni* are both grown in plantations in several Asian countries such as Fiji, Indonesia, India, and Bangladesh and this plantation mahogany timber is the main source of the world's current supply of "genuine mahogany", due to cultivation and trade of it in its native locations being restricted by the Convention On International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna CITES since the late 1990s. Trade in *Swietenia* grown and harvested in these non-native locations is not restricted. The fruits of *Swietenia macrophylla* are called "sky fruit", because they seem to hang upwards from the tree. The "sky fruit" concentrate is sold as a natural remedy that is said to improve blood circulation and skin. It is also said to have Viagra-like qualities regarding erectile dysfunction. Consumption of the sky fruit concentrate is approved by Malaysia Ministry of Health.