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DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF MAHOGANY

The principal species of the mahogany family (*Meliaceae*) that are commonly sold in this country as mahogany belong to the botanical genera *Swietenia* and *Khaya*. The members of the former group, consisting of four or five species that cannot be definitely distinguished by means of the wood alone, grow in tropical America from Mexico to Peru including the West Indies, and are variously known as American mahogany, or Cuban, Mexican, Honduras, Peruvian mahogany, etc., according to the country in which they originate. The latter genus, of which one species, *Khaya ivorensis*, supplies the bulk of imports, grows in Africa and is generally known in the trade as African mahogany.

The woods of these two genera, in addition to possessing a combination of wood properties which have caused mahogany to be highly prized as a cabinet wood, have a characteristic in common that helps to distinguish them from some other reddish-brown woods not of the mahogany family, but which have been called mahogany at times, namely, the occurrence of dark amber-colored gum in many of the pores. The gum does not fill the pores, but is recognized as dark specks or streaks in the pores as seen on smoothly cut end or side grain. It is barely visible to the naked eye, but is easily seen through a hand lens with a magnification of 10 to 15 diameters. Some other woods not of the mahogany family have similar dark masses of gum in the pores, but none of these is commonly substituted for mahogany.

American mahogany from West Indies, Central America, and South America has fine, continuous, concentric

lines on the cross section, usually from 1/32 to 1/2 inch apart, that distinguish it from the wood of *Khaya*, in which these lines are absent or occur only sporadically.

Woods of other genera of the *Meliaceae* family that appear in smaller quantities in the American markets, but which are rarely sold as mahogany or purported varieties of mahogany, are crabwood, sapeli, lovoa, East Indian satinwood, and calantas, imported from South America, Africa, India, and the Philippines in smaller quantities only, and Spanish cedar, which is imported in larger quantities and is easily recognized by its odor. Tanguile, red lauuan, and almon (which have been called "Philippine mahogany") have none of the dark masses of gum in the pores. On smoothly cut end surfaces these woods show more or less broken tangential lines 1/8 inch to several inches apart, readily visible to the naked eye, and appearing under a lens as rows of small openings filled with a white substance.