

NORTH AMERICAN HARDWOOD LUMBER IMPORTS - PROMINENT SPECIES

Spanish Cedar is indigenous to Latin America but also grows in plantations elsewhere, mainly Africa. African stock has become more popular over time and now ships to the U.S. in volumes comparable to those from Latin America. The species is utilized primarily in exterior siding, moulding, windows, and doors, though it is also a preferred wood for manufacturing cigar boxes. Usage is higher in the coastal sections of the U.S. Southeast than in other areas.

Cumaru is native to South America and often referred to as Brazilian Teak. The species is used mostly in decking, though some also goes into interior flooring. Demand typically ebbs and flows alongside deck installation season. Cumaru is less expensive than most tropical decking woods. However, it is not well-suited to all environments, therefore usage is not as widespread as Ipé.

Ipé grows in South America, primarily Brazil, and is a leading decking wood. Other end uses include exterior siding and interior flooring and stairs. Ipé business tends to peak just before and during outdoor construction season, though its niche in flooring and stair markets results in meaningful year-round business. Its limited growing range and expanding popularity in decking sometimes strain supplies. However, U.S. imports of Ipé lumber reached a 10-year high during the first half of 2018.

Jatoba, or Brazilian Cherry, derives mostly from Brazil and is among the most shock-resistant woods in the world. The species once had a sizeable niche in the North American residential flooring and stair sectors, but the trend away from red appearances curbed usage in recent years.

Keruing comprised more than 40% of all tropical hardwood lumber shipped from Asia to the U.S. in the first half of 2018. This species, also known as Apitong, is indigenous to Southeast Asia, with the heaviest concentrations in Malaysia and Indonesia. Keruing's unique combination of durability and flexibility make it highly suitable for truck trailer flooring. Some also goes into decking and heavy construction.

Genuine Mahogany is native to Latin America and is also produced in plantations in Fiji and Southeast Asia. It is utilized in architectural millwork, interior trim and paneling, cabinets, doors, and certain exterior applications. It was the tropical hardwood most imported to the US in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, imports tumbled following its 2003 listing in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). U.S. imports of Genuine Mahogany totaled just 4.1 million board feet in 2017, down 93% from the 1995 peak. It is now used almost exclusively in high-end projects where cost is a secondary consideration.



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The West African species **African Mahogany** and **Sapele** gained traction in North American markets in the mid-2000s, as Genuine Mahogany supply contracted and prices escalated after its CITES listing. End uses for African Mahogany include architectural millwork, furniture, and exterior doors, windows, and millwork. North America is its dominant market, with demand limited elsewhere. In contrast, Sapele enjoys broad international popularity, including in China and Europe. It goes into a wide variety of applications, such as interior and exterior doors, millwork, windows, and flooring. Sapele was the second-most imported tropical wood to the U.S. in 2017, with African Mahogany fourth. However, imports have fallen sharply in 2018 despite decent demand. Robust Chinese purchasing has strained Sapele supplies, and chronic port congestion is disrupting shipments of both species from West Africa.

Teak is indigenous to Southeast Asia though is also grown in some plantations in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Teak is among the most expensive exotic woods because of its unique outdoor performance characteristics. As such, it is used predominantly in very high-end exterior applications, including boat-building, decking, and fine outdoor furniture. Restrictions and new taxes on Teak exports from Myanmar have impacted international trade the last several years.

European Beech is the leading temperate hardwood species imported to the U.S., including a record 30.4 million board feet in 2017. It is most widely utilized in cabinets, though not to the exclusion of furniture, millwork, and other interior furnishings. It is popular in both clear and rustic applications. Regionally, usage is higher from the Rocky Mountains westward than in the East, with consumption in the Midwest somewhere in between.

