

the mahoganies (the family Meliaceae, the mahogany family)

Swietenia macrophylla: This is the mahogany that grows throughout mainland Central and South America. The most common of the many common names for this species is Honduras/Honduran mahogany, but it is also called in many cases by its country of origin, such as Nicaraguan, Mexican, etc. *Swietenia macrophylla* tends to be slightly more orange than *Swietenia mahagoni*, but the color and density are affected by the specific conditions in the area of growth, so there are no absolutes.

Swietenia mahagoni: This is the mahogany that grows in Florida, Cuba, and the Caribbean area in general. The most common of the common names of this wood is Cuban mahogany. *Swietenia mahagoni* tends to be a darker reddish brown than *Swietenia macrophylla*, but the color and density are affected by the specific conditions in the area of growth, so there are no absolutes.

Khaya spp.: The *Khaya* species sold as African mahogany ARE part of the mahogany family, but are separate from the *Swietenia* species of the Americas. The *Khaya* species tend to be lighter in color, generally more of a salmon/pink in tint, than the *Swietenia* species, but the color and density are affected by the specific conditions in the area of growth, so there are no absolutes.

Confusing mahogany terms, "genuine" and "true"

The term "genuine mahogany" is used in two conflicting ways: first, and by far the most common usage, is to distinguish *Swietenia* from *Khaya*, which to me is a reasonable distinction even if not quite accurate in its implication that *Khaya* is not a genuine mahogany, but second, it is sometimes used to specifically designate *Swietenia macrophylla*. Why this is, I do not know. The good news is that this second usage is rare.

The term "true mahogany" is also used in two conflicting ways, with the first, and by far the most common, usage being the reasonable distinction that a "true" mahogany is one that belongs to the mahogany family (this includes both *Swietenia* and *Khaya* species), but the second is to distinguish *Swietenia* (as "true") from *Khaya*, which to my mind is not helpful terminology in its implication that *Khaya* is not a true mahogany, but I don't get to make the rules, I just do my best to figure them out and report them. As with "genuine", the second, less helpful, usage is rare.

There are a number of woods that have mahogany in their names but that generally have nothing to do with mahogany. A few of the more widely known such names are:

- (1) "Philippine mahogany": This is a blanket name used for dozens of species (primarily *Shorea* species such as *meranti*), none of which are related to the mahogany family
- (2) "santos mahogany": This is *Myroxylon balsamum* of the family Leguminosae (the legume family), totally unrelated to mahogany.
- (3) "royal mahogany": This is a flooring industry marketing term for a wood that has absolutely nothing to do with mahogany (this kind of dishonesty is typical of the flooring industry, which also calls *curupay* by the grandiose name "Patagonian rosewood" even though it is totally unrelated to rosewood)

this entry taken from www.hobbithouseinc.com (if you are interested in exotic wood this site is a must)