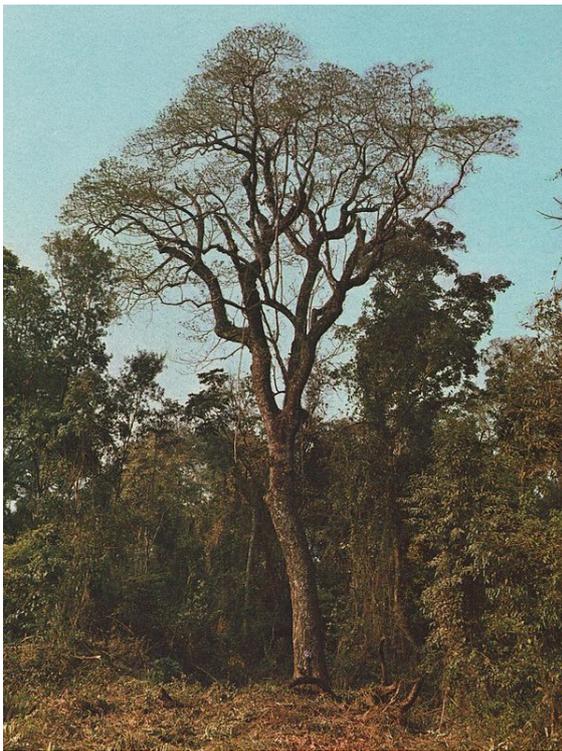


Myroxylon

Not to be confused with *Myroxylon* J.R.Forst. & G.Forst, a synonym of *Xylosma*.

Myroxylon, the source of Balsam of Peru and Balsam of Tolu (which differ in production), is a genus of tree grown in Central America (primarily in El Salvador) and South America.^[4] It is in the Fabaceae (Leguminosae) family of flowering plants. There are two species, *M. balsamum* and *M. peruiferum*.

1 The tree



Myroxylon peruiferum

The trees are large, growing to 40 metres (130 ft) tall, with evergreen pinnate leaves 15 centimetres (5.9 in) long, with 5–13 leaflets. The flowers are white with yellow stamens, produced in racemes. The fruit is a pod 7–11 centimetres (2.8–4.3 in) long, containing a single seed.^[5] The tree is often called *Quina* or *Balsamo*, *Tolu* in Colombia, *Quina quina* in Argentina, and sometimes *Santos Mahogany* or *Cabreuva* in the lumber trade.

The wood is dark brown, with a deep red heartwood. Nat-

ural oils grant it excellent decay resistance. In fact, it is also resistant to preservative treatment. Its specific gravity is 0.74 to 0.81.

As regards woodworking, the tree is moderately difficult to work but can be finished with a high natural polish; it tends to cause some tool dulling.

2 Invasive species

The balsam tree can become a highly invasive species when introduced into tropical countries where it is not native. In Sri Lanka, it has overgrown several hectares of the Udawatta Kele Sanctuary and is rapidly spreading there.^[6] In this Sri Lankan rain forest, *Myroxylon* seeds sprout in very high numbers due to tolerating more diverse light conditions than native species and due to the absence of natural enemies such as diseases and insects. This has given rise to dense stands of young trees where no other vegetation can grow, causing severe ecological disruption, *i.e.*, the disappearance of local, native plant species and consequently of the animals and insects that feed on these.^[7]

The tree has also been introduced to several Pacific islands such as Fiji and to Indonesia, and is a potential ecological threat there.^[5]

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4 External links

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