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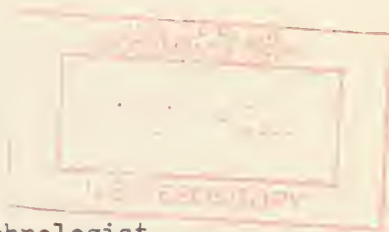
CONACASTE or GUANACASTE  
Enterolobium cyclocarpum (Jacq.) Gris.  
Family: Leguminosae

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By

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Eight species of the genus Enterolobium are known to occur in tropical America from southern Mexico to northern Argentina. One of the best known is Enterolobium cyclocarpum (Jacq.) Gris. E. contortisiliquum (Vell.) Morong, timbo or timboubá is common in northern Argentina and nearby Paraguay and Brazil. This species is sometimes substituted for Spanish cedar, cedrela (5).<sup>2</sup>

Common Names

The name guanacaste is of Nahuatl Indian origin, meaning ear-tree. The Costa Rican province of Guanacaste derives its name from this important tree. Other names include Juana Costa mahogany, conacaste, genizero or jenisero, orejon, pichwood, South American, Central American, or Mexican walnut, parota, cascabel, anjera, carito, caro, earpodtree, and kelobra (2, 4).

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<sup>1</sup>Maintained at Madison, Wis., in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin.

<sup>2</sup>Underlined numbers in parentheses refer to the list of numbered references at the end of the report.

## Distribution and Habitat

The tree is well known locally. It grows throughout Central America. Abundant supplies were available in 1943 in Costa Rica, the West Indies, northern South America, and Mexico (2, 3, 6, 7).

### The Tree

The trees grow rapidly and make excellent shade trees because of their broad tops. They form one of the 3 or 4 groups of largest trees in the forests of Central America. They may reach heights of 40 to 100 feet or more, and diameters of 2 to 8 feet, but the trunks seldom are very long (2, 4).

The seed pods are said to be excellent feed for cattle. The seeds and young pods are sometimes cooked for human food. The pods, which are broad and flat, are coiled so that they suggest a human ear (4, 7).

The fruit and bark are rich in tannin. They are often used as a soap substitute and are also believed to have some medicinal properties. Gum exuding from the trunk is used locally as a remedy for **bronchitis**.

### The Wood

#### Color

The heartwood is variable in color, often suggesting United States black walnut (Juglans), but it may show various shadings and is sometimes tinged with red or yellow. It has been rated as fairly attractive but hardly classed as a high-grade furniture wood. The sapwood may be quite thick and white or cream colored (2, 4).

#### Weight

Guanacaste is rather hard and heavy. The specific gravity air dry is 0.35 to 0.60, and the wood weighs 22 to 37 pounds per cubic foot (4).

#### Texture, Grain, and Figure

The tree grows rapidly. The texture of the wood is rather coarse; the pores are open and rather large. They occur singly or in pairs, and are rather scarce. The rays are fine and indistinct (4). Crotch material is common and produces figured wood suitable for paneling (2). Cross grain may occur, and gelatinous fibers may cause rough or fuzzy surfaces.

### Odor and Taste

The solid dry wood is unscented, but dust coming from it during working is reported to have a disagreeable, pungent odor. Some workmen are allergic to the sawdust and may develop skin eruptions. The wood contains a bitter substance said to be somewhat toxic (2).

### Durability

Guanacaste is considered only fairly durable in general. It is resistant to decay when in contact with the soil or in water, but it is not termite resistant.

### Working Qualities

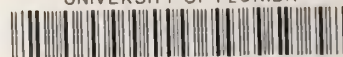
The wood varies in consistency from light, soft, and spongy, to rather hard and heavy. It is usually easy to work, finishes smoothly, and holds its place well.

### Uses

The large trunks are used locally for canoes, dories, solid ox-cart wheels, and water troughs. The wood is also used for veneer, carpentry, interior trim, decorative paneling, low cost furniture, and cabinet work. It is considered as a possible substitute for yellow-poplar in plywood core stock (1).

References

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