

Guarea

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Guarea is a genus of evergreen trees or shrubs in the family Meliaceae, native to tropical Africa and Central and South America. At their largest, they are large trees 20–45 m tall, with a trunk over 1 m diameter, often buttressed at the base. The leaves are pinnate, with 4–6 pairs of leaflets, the terminal leaflet present. They are dioecious, with male and female flowers on separate plants.[1] The flowers are produced in loose inflorescences, each flower small, with 4–5 yellowish petals. The fruit is a four or five-valved capsule, containing several seeds, each surrounded by a yellow-orange fleshy aril; the seeds are dispersed by hornbills and monkeys which eat the aril.

Species accepted by Plants of the World Online as of March 2019:[2]

The timber is important; the African species are known as bossé, guarea, or pink mahogany, and the South American species as cramantee or American muskwood. It is said to possibly cause hallucinations if ingested.[3]

The wood can be used for sculpture and was favoured by the British 20th century sculptor Barbara Hepworth.[4]

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