



Kalmia latifolia
Family: Ericaceae

Mountain Laurel

The genus *Kalmia* contains about 7 species native to North America. Mountain Laurel is the only species that attains tree size, the other six are shrubs. The genus *Kalmia* was dedicated by Linnaeus to his student Peter Kalm (1716-1779), Swedish botanist who traveled and collected in Canada and eastern United States.

Kalmia latifolia-American Briar, American Laurel, Big Leaved Ivy, Burl Laurel, Calico Bush, Calico-flower, Calico-tree, Ivy, Ivy Bush, Ivy Leaf Laurel, Ivywood, Kalmia, Lambkill, Laurel, Laurelwood, Mountain, Mountain Ivy, Pale Laurel, Poison Ivy, Poison Laurel, Root Laurel, Sheep Laurel, Small Laurel, Spoonwood, Wicky

Distribution

Southeast Maine west to New York, Ohio and southern Indiana south to western Tennessee, eastern Mississippi and southeast Louisiana east to northern Florida and Georgia.

The Tree

Mountain Laurel is a large shrub, occasionally reaching tree size (reaching 40 feet tall & 2 feet in diameter) in the eastern US. The leaves, buds, flowers and fruits are poisonous to humans and cattle, but not to indigenous wildlife such as deer. It has leathery, evergreen leaves and very showy flower clusters, making it a favorite plant for ornamental purposes. It prefers acid soils from lowlands to 4,000 feet elevations. It grows in association with oaks, tulip poplar, beech, sugar maple, white pine and sourwood.

The Wood

General

The wood of Mountain Laurel is heavy, hard, strong but rather brittle, with a close, straight grain. It has a light yellow sapwood and a yellow brown heartwood, spotted with red.

Mechanical Properties^{a,b} (2-inch standard)

	Specific gravity	MOE x10 ⁶ lbf/in ²	MOR lbf/in ²	Compression		WML ^a in-lbf/in ³	Hardness lbf	Shear lbf/in ²
				Parallel lbf/in ²	Perpendicular lbf/in ²			
Green	0.62	0.92	8,400	4,310	1,110	12.5	1,300	1,670
Dry	0.68	1.20	11,100	5,920	1,820	10.3	1,790	-

^aWML = Work to maximum load.
^bReference (59).

Drying and Shrinkage^{a,b}

Type of shrinkage	Percentage of shrinkage (green to final moisture content)		
	0% MC	6% MC	20% MC
Tangential	8.0	–	–
Radial	5.6	–	–
Volumetric	14.4	–	–
^a Mountain laurel will dry well if debarked and split.			
^b Reference (59)			

Working Properties: Works well with carving tools or lathe.

Durability: No information available at this time.

Preservation: No information available at this time.

Uses: Substitute wood for briar pipes, small objects & novelties, tool handles, woodenware, fuel.

Toxicity: No information available at this time.

Additional Reading and References Cited (in parentheses)

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