



**USDA Forest Service
Forest Products Laboratory
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Wood Technical Fact Sheet

Melaleuca quinquenervia

syn. M. leucadendron

Broad-Leaved Tea-Tree

Cajeput

Family: Myrtaceae

Other Common Names: Gelam (Malaya), Niaouli (New Caledonia), Cajeput (United States), Paper-bark (Australia).

Distribution: Native to eastern Australia, Malay Archipelago, New Caledonia, and New Guinea; grows in pure stands on wet coastal flats and brackish swamps. The tree has been widely planted in other tropical and subtropical areas, often becoming naturalized.

The Tree: May reach a height of 80 to 100 ft; usually 1 to 2 ft in diameter; boles frequently gnarled and twisted. The tree coppices easily. The thick spongy bark is distinctive and can be peeled off in large flakes.

The Wood:

General Characteristics: Heartwood pinkish brown; sapwood paler and rather ill defined. Grain straight to irregular or wavy; texture fine and uniform; lustrous; without distinctive odor or taste.

Weight: Basic specific gravity (oven-dry weight/green volume) 0.65; air-dry density 50 pcf.

Mechanical Properties: (2-in. standard)

Moisture content Bending strength Modulus of elasticity Maximum crushing strength
(%) (Psi) (1,000 psi) (Psi)

Green (6) 11,900 NA 5,920

Janka side hardness 1,530 lb for green material. Forest Products Laboratory toughness 175 in.-lb for green material (5/8-in. specimen).

Drying and Shrinkage: Difficult to season, prone to checking and warping; quartersawing may minimize degrade. No data available on kiln schedules. Shrinkage green to oven-dry: radial 4.0%; tangential 9.5%; volumetric 16.2%.

Working Properties: Readily worked with hand and machine tools and takes a good finish. Rather rapid dulling of cutters is reported. A silica content of 0.20 to 0.95% is reported.

Durability: Heartwood durable in ground contact; also resistant to termite attack and marine borer activity. Sapwood liable to powder-post beetle attack.

Preservation: No information available.

Uses: Carvings, cabinetwork, boatbuilding, fencing, railroad crossties, mine props, marquetry, veneers, gun stocks. The leaves are distilled to yield an oil used for medicinal purposes; corky bark flakes have also been used for insulation as well as stuffing for pillows, etc.

Additional Reading: (6), (11), (44), (78)