Hernandia sonora L.

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HERNANDIACEAE (HERNANDIA FAMILY)

No synonyms

Aguacatillo, cuajada, guaco, maga, mago, mano de León, tambor, volador

Hernandia sonora is distributed in wet and semideciduous forests of tropical America. It is found from Mexico, across Central America through Costa Rica, in Colombia and Ecuador, and in the West Indies. It grows in the departments of Santa Barbara, Atlantida, Colon, Comayagua, and Cortes (Benitez and Montesinos 1988, Standley 1931).

Hernandia sonora is a tree of up to 28 m in height and 80 cm in diameter. The roots are tabular at the beginning of the shaft, which is straight, cylindrical, and free of branches up to two-thirds of its height. The base is conical or slightly elongated; the crown is umbellated or multiflabellate and evergreen. The tree has clear and open foliage with obliquely rising branches. The bark is yellowish gray or brownish gray and moderately smooth and usually has prominent, rounded, and cracked longitudinal lenticels. It can be recognized by its ovate leaves with long pulvinated petioles, or by its lenticel bark with yellowish chamfer. The leaves are simple, whole, and loosely grouped at the end of the sprigs. Frequently found along river banks and in very wet places in lowland areas, the species grows at elevations from sea level to 500 m. In Honduras it grows in wet forests generally near water springs, up to 500 m.

When the wood dries, it is grayish white; it does not have a characteristic odor or taste. The wood has a straight hilum, thick texture, low shine, and soft grain (Standley 1931). Its specific gravity is 0.28 (very light). The wood has medium dimensional stability. It is easy to saw and work with carpentry machinery, but it does not plane, sand, mold, drill, turn, or chisel well. The wood resists cracking by screws and is easy to work with sharp tools, but saws produce a floccose finish. It is not very durable to biodeterioration, and it is susceptible to stain-causing fungi. The wood dries quickly in the open air, showing slight defects. If the process is neglected, considerable defects may occur. It is easy to preserve through systems of hot-cold bath and vacuum pressure. The wood of *H. sonora* is used for interior finishes, general carpentry, fillers for plywood, boxes and crates, baskets, scaffolds, chips for briquettes, pulp, and paper (Aguilar 1966).

The small, whitish-greenish flowers are axillary cymes. The species blooms and fruits almost all year. The fruits are ellipsoid to ovoid-globular drupes, approximately 2 to 4 cm in diameter, with eight longitudinal aristae, hard, and yellowish or black when ripe. Each fruit contains one seed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The bevel is 0.5 to 1 cm thick, yellowish or light yellow, with a dark coffee-colored zonal stripe under the rhytidome, turning a darker color with age, fibrous, compact, and soft to moderately hard. The petiole is 5 to 24 cm long, cylindrical, thin, glabrous, and slightly twisted at the apex; both ends are pulvinated (Benitez and Montesinos 1988, Standley 1931). The oval lamina is 10 to 25 cm, acuminate apex, obtuse to rounded; the base is coriaceous. The right side is shiny and dark blue-green, and the back is opaque blue-green; both surfaces are glabrous. The main vein is strongly prominent underneath; a pair of straight basal veins run up to the middle of the lamina; four to five pairs of straight secondary veins are prominent underneath, and camptodrome.


2cm