

## WEST INDIES MAHOGANY

*Swietenia mahagoni* (L.) Jacq.

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Meliaceae (mahogany)

**FNAI Ranks:** G3G4/S3

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Threatened

**Wetland Status:** US-none+ FL-UPL



Pete Diamond



Amy Jenkins

**Field Description:** An attractive tree that may reach heights up to 60 feet in Upper Keys hammocks and has dark gray fissured bark when mature. The compound, pinnate leaves have 6 to 8 pairs of asymmetrical leaflets up to 3 inches long. Pale, yellow-green flowers are each approximately ? inch wide with 5 petals and are loosely arranged in inconspicuous, stalked, axillary clusters. The fruit is a light brown, hard and woody, ovoid capsule, 2½ to 4 inches long, which splits open from bottom to top to reveal dull, tough, orange pulp and several winged seeds.

**Similar Species:** Older trees have a stout trunk with brown or gray bark that is coarsely fissured. It closely resembles those of mature live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*). Also, the compound leaf can be mistaken for gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*).

**Related Rare Species:** None.

**Habitat:** Rockland hammocks and coastal berms in the upper Keys.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring-summer.

**Range-wide Distribution:** South Florida (extreme southern peninsula south to the middle Florida Keys) and the West Indies.

**Conservation Status:** Frequently planted as a landscape plant, this species is uncommon in the wild, and is primarily native only to the northern Keys and southern hammocks of the Everglades. *Swietenia mahagoni* was a historically important timber in the lumber industry, but had been severely depleted because of the demand for its characteristic color and durability.

**Protection and Management:** Protect hardwood hammocks from clearing, development and erosion. Eradicate invasive plant species.

**References:** Wunderlin and Hansen 2011, Little 1978, Morton 1987, and Long and Lakela 1971.