

T I M B E R F O R B U I L D I N G
I N
E A S T A F R I C A

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. TIMBER SPECIES OF EAST AFRICA

These fall into four groups: indigenous and exotic; each divided into Broad leaved (or hardwood) species and Conifers (or softwood) species.

Indigenous Broad leaved species

These comprise the majority of the species and occur over the whole of East Africa though they are of particular economic importance to Uganda and Tanzania in the absence of large supplies of conifers. This group includes such species as Mvule, E.A. Camphor, African Mahogany, Muninga and many others most of which are more used for joinery than building though certain properties such as a locally favourable supply and durability may encourage their use in some circumstances. These timbers occur in natural forests though there are a few plantations.

Indigenous Conifers

The two species, Podo and Cedar, are declining in importance in Kenya as they become worked out. Both grow on the slopes of the higher mountains mainly in Kenya and N. Tanzania. Cedar may be classified as a scarce timber in large sizes but Podo is still available in Kenya and is fairly common in N. Tanzania.

Exotic Broad leaved species

The main species are ubiquitous saligna gum and grevillea from Australia. Other eucalypts are also grown in plantations and there is some teak in Tanzania. The eucalypts have mainly been used for poles and not great deal in converted form in construction though there is no reason why this should not be done.

Exotic Conifers

These include Cypress and Pine and are grown extensively in the Kenya Highlands and parts of Tanzania. Cypress is the main construction timber over much of East Africa and this market will be shared with Pine as increasing quantities of the latter become available.

2. NAMING OF TIMBER SPECIES

An indigenous timber may have ten or twenty vernacular names in addition to trade names and its botanical name. An attempt has been made to give the common species "Standard" names but these are not always used. A list of the more common names is given in Table 1 where there are also references to more detailed lists of names. In case of doubt the local Forest Department should be consulted. In specifications the botanical names should normally be given (especially for broad leaved species) together with the Standard name.

3. LOGGING AND CONVERSION

For reasons of handling the normal maximum length of sawn timber is about 6m. Longer lengths may be obtained with some difficulty and should be avoided as their cost is higher than normal lengths and there may be delays. The normal maximum width sawn is 300mm. There is no reason for widths greater than this not being available other than lack of demand and any restrictions imposed by the size of the log. Boards up to 400mm can be obtained from mills converting mature cypress and pines but require special orders. Wide boards should not contain pith or pine corewood as they may split.

4. INFORMATION

Further information on timber may be obtained from the local Forest Department, in particular the Utilisation Officer, the address of whom are:-

Kenya	-	Utilisation Officer, P.O. Box 30513, Nairobi.
Tanzania	-	Utilisation Officer, P.O. Box 10, Moshi.
Uganda	-	Utilisation Officer, P.O. Box 1752, Kampala.

Lists of millers and species being extracted together with details of timber properties etc. may be obtained from the Utilisation Officers.

Commercial information is listed under Section H.