

is the kapok of commerce and one used widely in life preservers, pillows and mattress stuffing.

Fustic *Chlorophora tinctoria*: The hard, heavy yellow wood is durable and resistant to dry-wood termites, much used in furniture and construction. A yellow dye extracted from the wood produces the yellow-brown color "khaki."

Fiddlewood *Ciharexylum fruticosum*: Wood is hard, heavy and strong; has been used for construction, furniture, musical instruments, fence posts. Fruits are edible and can be made into wine.

Calabash Tree *Crescentia cujete*: Fruit when dried and hollowed, is used to make containers and bowls.

Princewood *Exostema caribaeum*: Wood is hard, heavy and very strong. Used in cabinet-making and inlay work.

Lignum-vitae *Guaiacum officinale*: One of the most valuable commercial timbers. Extremely hard, heavy and durable, its resin content makes it self-lubricating; it has been used in bearings and bushing blocks of steamship propeller shafts.

Mahoe; Sea Hibiscus *Hibiscus tiliaceus*: Fibrous bark once used for ropes, nets, mats, and coarse cloth production.

West Indian Locust; Stinking-Toe Tree *Hymenaea courbaril*: Wood is very hard, durable and resistant to dry wood termites. An important timber species at times compared with mahogany. Used for veneer, cabinet-work and turnery.

Ironwood; Leadwood *Krugiodendron ferreum*: Once of the densest woods in the world. Used for cabinetwork and veneers.

Mastic *Mastichodendron foetidissimum*: Wood is hard, dense and durable. A good timber tree very suitable for construction, furniture and heavy planking.

Bay-rum tree *Pimenta racemosa*: An oil obtained by distilling the leaves is the main ingredient in bay rum, used in cosmetic and medicinal products

Jamaican Dogwood; Fish Poison Tree *Piscidia carthagenensis*: Carib Indians used root bark, young stems and powdered leaves to stun fish in open ponds.

Puerto Rican Royal Palm *Roystonea borinquena*: Dried leaves have served for wall and roof thatching.

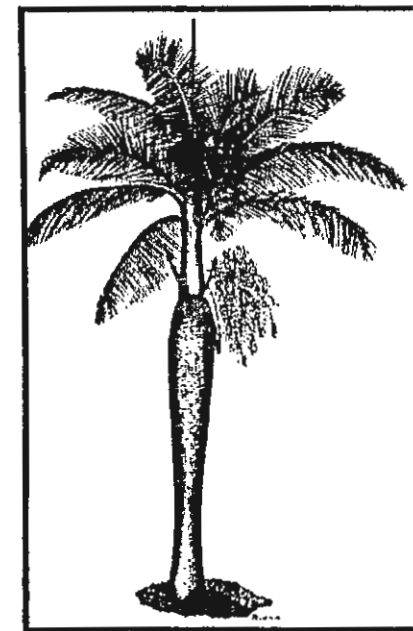
Puerto Rican Hat Palm *Sabal caustarum*: At one time the leaves were cured, bleached and dyed to make hats. Leaf fibers have been used in making mats and baskets.

Satinwood; Yellowheart *Zanthoxylum flavum*: Among the world's most valuable lumbers. It is very hard, heavy durable, and takes a fine polish. Wood has been prized for cabinet-making, veneer, inlay work, and furniture.

References

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Native Trees for Community Forests, Ken Jones

The Heritage Gardens of St. George Village Botanical Garden



Historical Usage of Trees and Palms on St. Croix

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St. Croix's trees have been economically important since the Europeans first arrived in the Caribbean.

During the Spanish and French ownership of St. Croix, little colonization or agriculture occurred on St. Croix. However, the dense forests attracted teams of woodcutters who harvested the dense forests for ship repairs, and for timber to export to other islands. However after 1696 the French virtually abandoned St. Croix, and the island remain largely unoccupied until the Danes purchased the island in 1733.



Thatch Palm
Coccothrinax argentea

This interval permitted the uninterrupted growth of hardwood forests, and this abundance of natural resources, in addition to the friendly terrain of St. Croix, convinced the Danish government to buy the island from the French. The forests filled with valuable timber caused much comment recorded in the histories from the era:

"Large trees...grew abundantly on all sides, covering the plains on St. Croix's south side and the mountains to the north in a dense greenery"

Reunert Haagensen, writing in the mid 1700's notes, *On this island there are numerous forests containing very large trees that are both useful and pleasant to see... everyone uses as much wood as required by his own needs, namely for the construction of storage buildings, slave dwellings and other essentials. The remainder of the wood and bush is burned in or-*

der to clear the land and prepare it for agricultural use.

The amount of valuable timber and rare trees that were destroyed by fire and by the ax when the Danes initially started to develop the island for agriculture is incredible.

However, Haagensen continued:

There were some, however, who purchase plantations with the sole aim of trading the timber. Then after the prime timbers have been cut they sell the property to someone else who wants to cultivate sugar or cotton. But plantations such as these cannot be located far from the sea inasmuch as the slaves and beasts of burden would have too far to haul the products to those points that are best suited for shipping. Many persons have realized considerable sums of money from such tracts of land, making it possible for them to live on the island in wealth.

... Everyone sought the riches there just to make money by selling the timbers ... shipments of timber are sold at high prices year after year, . Since there is such a lack of timber in the English possessions, Englishmen have to pay high prices for it. Consequently, they look for it in other places, principally in St. Croix as being the closest and best source in that part of America. So it is that the most beautiful houses in the English islands, namely St. Christopher, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Marten, Tortola and others are a witness to this timber trade.

Likewise, the majority and better quality of windmills and horse mills are constructed from the same St. Croix timber.

Haagensen continues *... the many rare trees that are found in such quantities there. They have all kinds of names, such as Mahogany, ... Fustick (fustic), and Pockwood (lignum vitae). Not a great deal of this wood has been burned because anyone who clears his forest either lets the wood lie to the side or leaves it*

standing. In a forest, such trees are considered practically as good as money in the bank...

Historic Usage of Common Trees and Palms

Silver Palm; Thatch Palm *Coccothrinax argentea*: leaves used for thatching and for brooms

Dog-Almond, Angella *Andira inermis*: Highly decorative wood used in furniture and cabinet work, construction, bridge work and house framing.

Black Olive; Gre-Gre *Bucida buceras*: Wood is hard with high density, durable in contact with the ground, resistant to dry-wood termites, and takes a fine polish. Suitable for heavy-duty flooring, construction and fence posts. Bark was formerly used in tanning

Turpentine Tree, Gumbo-limbo *Busera stauruba*: lightweight wood, soft very perishable. Aromatic resin has been used as a glue, in varnish and as incense.

Divi-divi *Caesalpinia coriaria*: Seed pods contain 30% to 50% tannin and have been used commercially in tanning leather. A black dye is also obtained from the pods.

Cigar Box Cedar; West Indian Cedar; Spanish Cedar *Cedrela odorata*: One of the most valuable timbers for use in tropical America. Durable and resistant to dry-wood termites and other insects. Aromatic wood is a favorite for chests and wardrobes.

Kapok; Silk Cotton Tree *Ceiba pentandra*: The wood is soft and of little use for construction; Arawaks and Caribs used tall straight trunks for canoes: The floss from the seed pods