

***Caesalpinia sappan* (Sappan wood)**

Caesalpinia sappan, commonly known as sappan wood, is a species of flowering tree in the legume family, Fabaceae. It is native to South East Asia and has been used for centuries for its valuable heartwood.

Classification

Kingdom: Plantae

Subkingdom: Tracheobionta

Division: Magnoliophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order: Fabales

Family: Fabaceae

Genus: *Caesalpinia*

Species: *sappan*



PHYSICAL CHARACTERS

Height: The tree typically grows to a height of 10–15 meters (about 33–49 feet).

Trunk: The trunk and branches are covered with spiny thorns, which are a notable feature of the tree.

Bark: The bark is grayish-brown, rough, and scaly.

Leaves: The leaves are bipinnate, meaning they are compound with each leaflet having smaller leaflets.

Flowers: The flowers are bright yellow and form in dense racemes.

Fruit: The fruit is a legume pod.

ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE

It is economically significant for its production of brazilin, a natural red dye used in textiles, cosmetics, and food coloring. The wood is also valued for crafting furniture and decorative items due to its durability and rich color. In traditional medicine, various parts of the plant are used for their purported anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties.

INTERESTING FACTS

Sappan wood was a major commodity in ancient trade routes like the Silk Road. It was so highly valued that it was used as a currency in some regions and was a crucial export from South East Asia, particularly influencing the naming of the country Brazil, which was named after brazilwood, a similar tree that also produces a red dye.