

HARDWOODS AND HIGH QUALITY SOFTWOODS

# West African Iroko



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What is West African Iroko?

*Iroko timber is a very popular hardwood species due to its close similarity with Teak, making it an excellent alternative as Iroko is less expensive. We stock Iroko timber from West Africa, with Next Working Day and Saturday delivery also available, as well as Same Working Day collection.*

**West African Iroko** timber is imported at grade FAS, mainly kiln dried. It is yellow when freshly machined which quickly changes to medium, then darker brown. When used for exterior joinery such as garden furniture it will become silver-grey if left untreated. Iroko timber is commonly used as an inexpensive alternative to Teak because they are similar in density, grain structure and colour after ageing, due to Teak's scarce nature and strict export laws.

When machined, despite careful pre-straightening, some products may twist and bow shortly after processing. Part of this issue is down to the denseness of the timber and part of it is down to having interlocked grain. Interlocked grain spirals around the centre of the tree thus alternating intermittently and causing a 'rough' effect, this can generally be reduced if not eliminating by heavy sanding.

**Thicknesses** 25mm, 32mm, 38mm, 50mm, 63mm, 75mm and 100mm. Widths mainly 130mm - 350mm, average about 200mm. Lengths; generally, 2m - 4.8m.

**Latin name** Chlorophora excelsa, Chlorophora regia

**Also known as** Odum (Ghana and Ivory Coast), mvule (East Africa), kambala (Zaire), bang (Cameroons), moreira (Angola), tule, intule (Mozambique)



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**Introduction** Formerly known as *Milicia excelsa* Benth and Hook f. and *Milicia regia* A. Chev.

**Environmental** Listed in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species as LR - Lower risk (near threatened): close to being classed as vulnerable also meets CITES Appendix II criteria.

**Distribution** *Chlorophora excelsa* has a wide distribution in tropical Africa, from Sierra Leone in the west, to Tanzania in the east. *Chlorophora regia* is confined to West Africa, where it occurs from Senegal to Ghana. There does not appear to be any significant difference between the timber of the two species.

## West African Iroko Properties

**The Tree** *Chlorophora excelsa* attains very large sizes, reaching 45m or more in height and up to 2.7m in diameter. The stem is usually cylindrical and mostly without buttresses. It occurs in the rain, and mixed deciduous forests.

**The Timber** When freshly cut, or when unexposed to light, the heartwood is distinct yellow colour, but on exposure to light it quickly to light it quickly becomes golden-brown. The sapwood is narrow, being about 50mm to 75mm wide, and clearly defined. The grain is usually interlocked and the texture is rather coarse but even, and the wood weighs on average 660 kg/m<sup>3</sup> when dried. Large, hard deposits of calcium carbonate called 'stone' deposits, are sometimes present in cavities, probably because of injury to the tree. They are often enclosed by the wood and not visible until the time of sawing, though the wood around them may be darker in colour, thus giving an indication of their presence.



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**Drying** The timber dries well and rapidly, with only a slight tendency to distortion and splitting.

**Strength** Iroko has excellent strength properties, comparing well with teak, though weaker in bending and in compression along the grain.

**Working Qualities** Medium to difficult, Iroko works fairly well with most tools, though with some dulling effect on their cutting edges, especially when calcareous deposits are prevalent. On quarter-sawn stock, there is a tendency for grain to pick up due to interlocked grain, and a reduction of cutting angle to 15° is usually necessary to obtain a smooth surface. An excellent finish can be obtained if the grain is filled. It takes nails and screws well and can be glued satisfactorily.

**Durability** Durable, the heartwood is very durable and is reported to be naturally resistant to decay. Heartwood is susceptible to attack by dry-wood insects. Sapwood is susceptible to attack by powder-post beetle. Sapwood has been reported to be highly resistant to termite attack in Africa.

**Treatability** Extremely difficult

**Moisture Movement** Small

**Density (mean, Kg/m<sup>3</sup>)** 660

**Texture** Medium

**Availability** Readily available

**Chemical Properties** Occasional deposits of stone may occur.



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**Physical Properties** Medium hardness, weight, bending and crushing strength. Very low stiffness and shock resistance. Moderate steam bending, good stability.

Working with West African Iroko

**Use(s)** Joinery interior and exterior, cladding, decking, boatbuilding, piling and marine work, domestic flooring, furniture, cabinetwork.

**Colour(s)** Yellow brown

What is FAS Grade?

The FAS grade

The FAS grade, which derives from an original grade 'First and Seconds', will provide the user with long, clear cuttings - best suited for high quality furniture, interior joinery and solid wood mouldings. Maximum board size is 6" (152mm) and wider and 8' (2.44m) and longer. The FAS grade includes a range of boards that yield from 83.3% (10/12ths) to 100% clear-wood cuttings over the entire surface of the board. The clear cuttings must be a minimum size of 3" (76mm) wide by 7' (2.13m) long or 4" (102mm) wide by 5' (1.52m) long. The minimum width and length will vary, depending on species and whether the board is green or kiln dried. Both faces of the board must meet the minimum requirement for FAS.

Timbersource are a leading online timber merchant in the UK, supplying Iroko timber to the joinery, carpentry, construction and building trade at competitive prices. To contact us, [Click Here](#).



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