

Dandeli Teak: A Sustainable Legacy

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ABSTRACT

Teak is a tree species of the tropical region. In India, it occurs in deciduous forests, while in Myanmar and other Asian countries it extends to relatively moister forests as well. India has the richest genetic resources of teak in the world. The unique wood quality of Dandeli teak wood from these areas is excellent because of the pristine environment and excellent forest management. It has a golden brown colour and straight grains with irregular spirals. The Teli variety is distinguishable from the common teak for possessing softer leaves and reddish-brown stem. The timber from the Teli variety of teak is reputed to be valued more by the timber merchants.

INTRODUCTION

Teak (*Tectona grandis* L.f.), belonging to family Lamiaceae, is one of the most important tropical hardwood species of high-quality timber in the international market. Teak is a tree species of the tropical region. In India, it occurs in deciduous forests, while in

Myanmar and other Asian countries it extends to relatively moister forests as well. In India, teak is distributed naturally in the peninsular region below 25° latitude over a wide range of climatic and geographic conditions. India has the richest genetic resources of teak in the

world. Different ecotypes have been evolved in teak since it occurs in different climatic and edaphic zones found over the entire range (Kedharnath and Matthews, 1962). The variations are seen in vigour, tree form, colour and shape of leaves, resistance to insect attack, wood colour, specific gravity, strength, durability and other characters. These may be morphological, physiological or genetical variations.

According to Champion and Seth Forest classification (1968), teak-bearing forests occur in two sub-groups, namely, 3B – ‘South Indian moist deciduous forest’, and 5A – ‘Southern tropical dry deciduous forest’. In each of the above sub-groups, one teak-bearing forest type has been indicated. They are: 3B/C1 – ‘Moist teak-bearing forest’ and 5A/C1 – ‘Dry teak-bearing forest’. The type ‘Moist teak-bearing forest’ (3B/C1) has been further classified into three sub-types: 3B/C1a: Very moist teak forest; 3B/C1b: Moist teak forest; and 3B/C1c: Slightly moist teak forest.

Champion and Seth in 1968 have given forest of Dandeli, in Uttara Kannada district, as an example of moist teak forest (3B/C1b) with the following floristic composition. Characteristic species of this sub-type are *Tectona grandis* (saguwani/ tega), *Terminalia paniculata* (hunal/kindal), *Terminalia tomentosa* (matti), *Lagerstroemia lanceolata* (nana/nandi), *Dalbergia latifolia* (beete/sissum) and *Xylia xylocarpa* (jamba). Forests belonging to the sub-type Dry teak forest (5A/C1b) occur prominently on the eastern edge of the Western Ghats, especially in the districts of Belagavi (eastern part of Khanapur taluk), Uttara Kannada (Haliyal parts of Sambrani, Bhagavathi, Kirwatti, Mundgod and Katur forest ranges), Dharwad (Kalaghatgi range and part of Dharwad range), Haveri (parts of Dhundsi and Hanagal ranges) etc. These forests are also known as teak pole forests. Here, the proportion of teak in certain patches may be as high as 30-40 %, although

anthropogenic pressures have adversely affected the forests resulting in substantial reduction in the proportion.

India was once the world's leading producer of teak, boasting vast natural teak forests across the central and southern regions. Uncontrolled deforestation and increasing demand led to a decline in natural teak reserves. The government-imposed bans on clear-felling in the 1980s, promoting plantation-based teak production. The total area under teak plantation in India is estimated to be about 9 million ha, of which major contribution comes from the States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Tripura and Mizoram (Sangram, 2024).

Total area of teak forest in Karnataka is 78,552.1 ha. In Uttara Kannada district area is about 45,232.69 ha, Haliyal Forest Division total teak area is 6614.80 ha. Range-wise distribution of teak plantations in Haliyal forest division is as follows: Virnoli range (1,954.70 ha), Dandeli range (1,422.15 ha), Bhagawati range (1,324.81 ha), Barchi range (734.72 ha), Sambrani range (656.97 ha), Haliyal range (283.87 ha) and Jagalbet range (237.58 ha) (Deepak, 2021).

Dandeli teak

Dandeli teak is found in the Haliyal and Dandeli forest regions in Karnataka. It has caught the eyes of many because of its exceptional qualities. The unique wood quality of teak from these areas is excellent because of the pristine environment and excellent forest management. The teak grows in India's Western Ghats, which are rich in essential tertiary minerals including silicates, manganese, mica and iron. It has a golden brown colour and straight grain pattern with irregular spirals. Dandeli teak wood lends an understated refinement to interior and furniture designs with its exquisite and consistent look.

Dandeli teak wood regularly astounds with its strength and toughness, which match Burma teak. It is suited for both indoor and outdoor furniture, it demonstrates remarkable resistance to dampness, rot and insects. Strong and resilient Dandeli teak wood is a great option for heavy-duty applications because it ensures lifespan and structural integrity. The wood's natural resistance to decay and insects, coupled with its ability to withstand the elements, makes it highly sought after for outdoor furniture, boat building, flooring and construction.

Dandeli teak with sustainable legacy: Dandeli teak wood, on the other hand, demonstrates a more virtuous ethical position. Sustainable forest management techniques are emphasized in the Dandeli region of Karnataka, India, producing supplies that are certified and comply with the law. Dandeli teak wood emphasizes ethical logging practices to guarantee little environmental effect while giving customers a worthwhile and morally sound choice (Anon, 2023).



Fig: Dandeli Teak (Pic courtesy: Praveen Raj)

Teli Teak variety:

In certain parts of Karnataka, particularly in Uttara Kannada district, a special variety of teak known as the Teli variety occurs. The Teli teak variety is distinguishable from the common teak for possessing softer leaves and reddish brown stem. The timber from the Teli variety of teak is reputed to be valued more by the timber merchants. Seeds of Teli variety of teak of Haliyal origin were reported to have given better germination and plant per cent as compared to High Forest seeds of the same locality (Syed, 1957). A plantation with Teli teak variety was raised in 1923 over 50 acres at Hudsa Compartment Nos. 1 and 2, F.S. I (now located in Kali Tiger Reserve). The plantation contains F.R.I. Sample Plot No. 6.]. The forests of Uttara Kannada district were well-known for harbouring very large teak trees. The Bombay Gazetteer for North Kanara district (1883) has mentioned the presence of two large teak trees in the Gund forests, one with a girth over 21 feet and the other with about 19 feet. (Deepak, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The unique wood quality of teak wood from these areas is excellent because of the pristine environment and excellent forest management. The timber grows in India's Western Ghats, which are rich in essential tertiary minerals including silicates, manganese, mica and iron. Strong and resilient Dandeli teak wood is a great option for heavy-duty applications because of its straight grain pattern and ensures lifespan and structural integrity.

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