

TREE PROFILE

Corporación Ambiental La Pedregoza

Common Name: Simarrú	Scientific Name: <i>Simarouba amara</i>	Family: Simaroubaceae
Region: From Central America to Brazil, and in the Caribbean islands	Size: Up to 20 meters tall and with a trunk diameter of 50 cm	Habitat: Grows in Gallery Forests, Rocky Hills and Savannah
Leaves: Imparipinnate, helicoidal, alternate, oblong, 10 x 4.5 cm	Bark: Externally cracked	Phenology: Flowers in Dec. and Jan., seeds in April and May
Basic Density: Between 0.35 and 0.45	Foliage: Dark Green, lustrous	Propagation: By seeds

Uses: The Simarrú is a multi-use tree that has suffered from uncontrolled logging in Vichada and elsewhere. As a result the WWF has recommended that consumers look for FSC certification before purchasing *Simarouba amara* wood. The tree is highly prized for its easy to work wood, used for fine furniture, as artisanal wood and for musical instrument making. The wood is termite resistant and extracts of leaves and wood have been used to make home insecticides. The tree also features prominently in the preparation of many traditional medicines. Combined with its other features, Simarrú enjoys folkloric interest and is sometimes planted as an ornamental tree in open areas. In the Orinoco River basin it has been used for the making of doors and windows and for construction beams and joists.



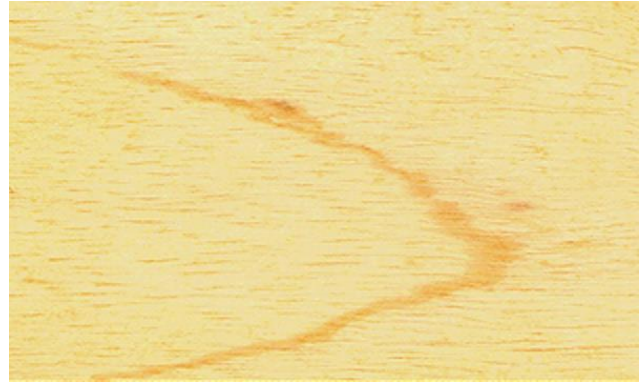
Simarrú tree



Simarrú seedling at La Pedregoza

Growth: Simarrú is considered to be of rapid growth, making it an interesting alternative to the use of introduced *Acacia mangium* as an afforestation species in Vichada. Seed distribution is by animals and birds. In fact, studies have shown that Simarrú seeds first ingested by monkeys have a better germination rate than seeds collected directly from the tree. The tree grows with a relatively straight trunk, another reason why it is popular as a carpentry wood. The crucial factor in cultivating Simarrú trees seems to be access to light. Planting experiments with the tree in rainforest versus open savannah have shown that Simarrú may grow up to seven times faster if light access is not limited. This species may also benefit from traditional ditching methods to reduce below ground competition when planted, as it develops good root systems that in turn prevent erosion.

Pressures: *Simarouba amara* has been over logged in many locations due to its prized wood. For example, there are only a few trees left in natural settings in the Puerto Carreño area. As with other important wood species, Simarrú suffers from logging without replanting. With the exception of some test cultivations at *La Pedregoza*, there are no known *Simarrú* plantations in Vichada. In the wild the tree does not like to grow in proximity to other *Simarrú*, which has added to the pressure on this species.



Simarrú wood



Simarrú fruits

Recommendations: The conservation of this tree in the Orinoquia is important as a food source for local fauna. It is also a very promising alternative for afforestation and reforestation in the region, and could potentially replace introduced plantation species with a truly native species tolerant of savannah conditions. Studies are still required to better understand how this tree can be grown in Vichada, and it is important to establish a seed bank for the species. At *La Pedregoza*, we propose to conduct ongoing studies dedicated to learning how best to cultivate and conserve this tree, for land restoration, biodiversity and forestry purposes.



The La Pedregoza Environmental Corporation is a non-profit NGO dedicated to the conservation of native species in the Orinoco River basin, and the administrator of the La Pedregoza Natural Reserve. We welcome individuals and businesses who would like to assist us in the conservation and protection of native tree species and other Orinoco flora and fauna. For more information please contact us at trees@pedregoza.org

La Corporación Ambiental La Pedregoza es una ONG sin ánimo de lucro, dedicada a la conservación de especies nativas de la cuenca del Río Orinoco y administradora de la Reserva Natural de la Sociedad Civil La Pedregoza. Se da la bienvenida a personas y empresas que deseen ayudar en la conservación y protección de árboles nativos y otras especies en la Orinoquía. Para más información contacte a arboles@pedregoza.org