

# Tree Profile

Common Name: <b>Congrio</b>	Scientific Name: <b><i>Acosmium nitens</i></b>	Family: <b>Fabaceae or Leguminosae</b>
Region: <b>From Colombia to Surinam and thru to the south of Brasil.</b>	Size: <b>Up to 20 meters tall and a trunk diameter of 70 cm</b>	Habitat: <b>Grows in the inundation forest and in low-lying savannah</b>
Leaves: <b>Imparipinnate, helicoidal, alternate, elliptical, 7.5 x 4 cm</b>	Bark: <b>Externally cracked, coffee colored</b>	Phenology: <b>Flowers in Sept. and Oct., seeds in February March</b>
Basic Density: <b>On average 0.8</b>	Foliage: <b>Green and of thin texture</b>	Propagation: <b>By seeds</b>

**Uses:** The Congrio is a tree that has extremely heavy and dense wood which makes it ideal for heavy construction projects, such as pillars and posts. It is termite and rot resistant and reputed to last more than 30 years in direct contact with the soil, making it an ideal fence post wood, or for use in docks. At present it is not being cultivated, but is being logged from natural settings on a regular basis by residents of Vichada. Besides the primary use for heavy construction, it also is of interest for folkloric reasons. Due to its weight and density it is hard to work for everyday carpentry. From a forestry point of view Congrio is interesting, because it can be cultivated in low-lying areas that would otherwise not have an economic use. There is scientific support for the fact that Congrio is a nitrogen-fixing tree and a habitat for mycorrhizal fungi.



*Congrio tree*



*Congrio seeds*

**Growth:** The tree has abundant seeds in normal circumstances, though it has been known not to seed when conditions are very dry. The seed pods are small and dark and contain 1 to 2 seeds in each pod that look almost like apple seeds. Despite its density, Congrio seems to cultivate well, though it is probably a 20 to 25 year tree to maturity. Surprisingly, the tree is happy to grow in well-drained areas if provided with fertilizer, in which case growth seems to be much faster, making it a viable option for plantation forestry and also for landscape restoration. *Acosmium nitens* trees can often be found in groups, giving rise to the Spanish term *congriales*.

**Pressures:** The Congrio is presently not listed as vulnerable or endangered, but uncontrolled logging, especially for fence posts, is a huge problem. While the tree is often in areas of inundation, the dry season months provide ample opportunity for logging of this valuable species. With the exception of some test cultivations at *La Pedregoza*, there are no known *Acosmium nitens* plantations, and the tree suffers from logging without replanting.



*Logging of Congrio posts*



*Congrio test cultivation at La Pedregoza*

**Recommendations:** This species shows considerable promise for forestry in Colombia, as dense woods for heavy construction will always be in demand. Learning more about how to cultivate this tree, from its germination and maintenance in tree nurseries through to its planting in natural areas or cultivation in plantations is highly recommended. More needs to be known about its nitrogen-fixing properties and its uses in low-lying and marginal lands in Vichada. At *La Pedregoza*, we propose to conduct studies and field projects dedicated to learning how best to cultivate the tree for forestry use and for replanting in natural settings, so as to encourage others to help with its conservation. This would include becoming a certified seed bank for the species.



*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](mailto: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](mailto:arboles@pedregoza.org)*