Online Newsletter of International Teak Information Network

Teaknet Bulletin

www.teaknet.org

Volume 18 | Issue 1

January 2025

TEAKNET wishes a very Happy & Prosperous New Year 2025 to all our Readers !

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Editorial

TEAKNET ushers in 2025 with new hopes and aspirations. Through the past 29 years, TEAKNET has successfully established a global network of teak cultivators, traders, private enterprises, plantation managers, researchers, students and other stakeholders. TEAKNET has been successful in disseminating relevant information on teak and providing custom made solutions to different stakeholders. The success of this network is the result of each of your valuable contribution and we seek your continued support in all our future endeavours.

In this issue, we bring you an article on 'The timeless legacy of Teak: Unveiling its history, importance, and enduring relevance'. The article deals with the deep cultural and historical significance of teak and its prominence in religious monuments, naval ships, and ancient architecture. The article provides glimpses of conservation efforts focussed on sustainable practices, genetic research, and preserving its legacy as a symbol of resilience and beauty. The ITTO-BMEL Teak Project Phase 2 will host a series of webinars in 2025-2026, starting with the Webinar on *"Teak Supply Chains and Market Demands,"* and we warmly invite all stakeholders to participate in this insightful event. We also bring to you the second announcement of the 5th World Teak Conference scheduled for 17 – 20 September 2025 at Grand Hyatt Bolgatty, Kochi, Kerala, India. In addition, market price of plantation teak imported to India and our regular column on teak prices are provided for the benefit of our readers.

We invite your feedback on issues related to teak and enrich us with articles, news, research papers etc. of non-technical nature for inclusion in the bulletin.

S. Sandeep
TEAKNET Coordinator

The timeless legacy of Teak: Unveiling its history, importance, and enduring relevance

A N. Arunkumar[1], Kannan C. S. Warrier[2] and Rekha R. Warrier[3]

[1]Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Bengaluru, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), India
[2]Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi 680 653, Thrissur, Kerala, India
[3]Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding , Coimbatore, India

Teak (*Tectona grandis*), famously called the "King of Timber," is a tree celebrated globally for its exceptional wood quality, historical significance, and versatile uses. Originating from the tropical regions of India, Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, this hardwood species has carved a unique place in industries ranging from construction to shipbuilding and even traditional medicine. Belonging to the Lamiaceae family, teak is a deciduous tree that can reach up to 30 meters in height, with a cylindrical crown, sturdy quadrangular branches, and robust roots. Its golden-yellow heartwood, known for its striking grain patterns and natural decay resistance and withstand harsh weather, has made it the gold standard for timber. The wood's durability is attributed to polyphenolic compounds that repel water and termites, and its legendary lifespan makes it a favourite for high-end furniture, decking, and yachts.

The world's first commercial teak plantation was established in 1841 in Nilambur, Kerala, India, by the British, parts of which are still preserved. There exists several ambiguities in the actual time of introduction of teak in different regions of the world. However, as per the available records on the historical data accessed for this study, teak was introduced to Java, Indonesia, in the 14th century, where it thrived and became naturalized. The Thainganninaung plantation in Myanmar, started in 1856 is recorded as one of the oldest in the world. In 1680, a Dutchman named Van Rhede established Sri Lanka's first successful teak plantation. Other notable introductions of teak in Asia include Bangladesh in 1871, Solomon Islands in the 1950s, Malaysia in 1800, and Vietnam in 1930. In Africa, Germans introduced teak to Tanzania in 1898, with seeds from India. By 1902, teak plantations were established in Nigeria that used seeds from India, Myanmar, and Thailand, which later spread to Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin, and Senegal. In tropical America, teak reached Trinidad and Tobago in 1913 via seeds from Myanmar, later expanding to Panama, Honduras, and other regions. Teak's wide adaptability and value ensured its spread to diverse climates worldwide.

Teak has played a pivotal role in history, particularly in shipbuilding. During the colonial period, the British relied heavily on Indian teak for their naval ships, which were prized for their durability and resistance to water and decay. More than 60 teak ships were constructed in Indian dockyards between 1793 and 1815, helping solidify British naval dominance. The timber's ability to withstand marine conditions made it a preferred material for ship decks, masts, and hulls. Further, the wood's unique qualities made it a symbol of wealth and prestige in ancient architecture.

In Indonesia, teak has been an integral part of cultural and religious structures. The Menara Kudus mosque's teakwood tower and the four massive teak pillars of the Demak Grand Mosque are testament to the tree's enduring importance. Similarly, the Karaton Surakarta Hadiningrat Grand Mosque and numerous Buddhist temples in Thailand and Myanmar feature intricate teak carvings that have stood the test of time. The roof of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and the Great Mosque of Kairouan in Tunisia incorporate finely

Read more on page 3

Continued from page 2

carved teakwood, emphasizing its durability and aesthetic appeal. In East Africa, the Bohra Mosque in Lamu, a UNESCO World Heritage site, showcases Indian-imported teak beams in its construction. In Javanese culture, the Centhini manuscript (1820–1823) emphasized the sacredness of teak and promoted its conservation. Burma, with a rich history of natural teak included teak in cultural rituals, such as foundation sacrifices by the Kongbaung Dynasty and in monumental structures like the Bayinnaung Kanbawzathadi Palace (1556). In Thailand, teak's significance extended to iconic structures like the Giant Swing in Bangkok.

Teakwood has played a significant role in architecture, culture, and history across various regions in India. Palaces, temples, and religious monuments in India, such as Kerala's traditional Nalukettu houses and temple flagpoles (Dwajasthambas), were often constructed using teak. In Kerala, early churches like St. Francis Assisi Church (1503) featured indigenous designs with teakwood elements, while polychrome teak structures adorned historical Goan churches such as Santa Monica and Saint Francis. Similarly, the Saint Joseph Jesuit Seminary in Macao (1750) incorporated teak lattice windows. The Karla caves in Maharashtra (1st century BC) featured ornate teak roofs and teak has been reported to be used to protect palm leaf manuscripts in Tamil Nadu. The Somanatha temple in Western India, described in ancient texts, was adorned with teak pillars covered in lead showcasing its revered status. Prominent Indian examples of teak use also include Tippu Sultan's palaces in Mysore (1781–1791) and the Gajapathi Palace in Odisha (1835–1843). Teak's enduring use highlights its importance in architecture, spirituality, and historical trade throughout the world.

Beyond architecture, teak has also been a cultural icon in maritime traditions such as the maritime trade evidenced by teak remains found at Berenike Troglodytica, an ancient Egyptian port. Archaeological evidence suggests that its use in shipbuilding dates back to the Harappan period, one of the most ancient civilizations known to mankind. In the Javanese culture, ancient manuscripts even personify the teak tree, describing it as a living entity with a soul to discourage overharvesting.

In recent times, the depletion of natural teak forests has raised alarms about the conservation of this precious resource. Imposing logging bans on felling from natural teak forests, there is a growing emphasis on sustainable practices like planting "trees outside forests". Advances in genetic research, such as DNA fingerprinting has much more limited application in identification of superior teak for breeding say compared to the advances made in genomics. Technologies like artificial intelligence and remote sensing are being explored to optimize plantation management and growth prediction. However, the erosion of genetic diversity of teak remains a cornerstone of conservation efforts. Initiatives like the National Teak Germplasm Bank in India aim to preserve teak's rich genetic resources, ensuring adaptability to future climatic changes. Research into teak's molecular biology has unveiled genes responsible for its wood quality and resilience, paving the way for targeted breeding programs.

In the face of increasing global demand, the key lies in balancing teak's economic importance with ecological preservation. Community engagement, sustainable plantation practices, and stricter regulations against illegal logging are vital to achieving this balance. With its unmatched properties and rich legacy, teak continues to be a symbol of resilience and beauty—a true "Jewel among Timbers."

For reference

Arunkumar, A.N., Warrier, K.C.S., Warrier, R.R. (2024). The Timeless Legacy of Teak: Unveiling Its History, Importance, and Enduring Relevance. In: Uthup, T.K., Karumamkandathil, R. (eds) Economically Important Trees: Origin, Evolution, Genetic Diversity and Ecology. Sustainable Development and Biodiversity, Vol. 37. Springer, Singapore.

5th World Teak Conference 2025

Call for Abstracts now Open!!

Submission deadline: 28 February 2025

Thematic Sessions of the Conference

* Value addition, markets and legal supply chains
* Financial analysis on short rotation teak investments in different teak growing regions
* Recent advances in teak genetics and stand management of natural and planted teak forests
* Management models for smallholder teak plantations and agroforestry systems in Asia, Africa and Latin America
* Environmental protection, biodiversity conservation and Forest Landscape Restoration

Submit your Abstract online

https://worldteakconference2025.com/abstract/

Webinar on Teak Supply Chains and Market Demands

Invitation to Webinar: Teak Supply Chains and Market Demands

Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture

ITTO

KASETSART UNIVERSITY SINCE 1943

Join us for an engaging webinar exploring how plantations of teak and other valuable species can meet market demands while ensuring compliance with legality and sustainability standards. It will also discuss the challenges faced by smallholders in addressing supply chains and market dynamics.

Date: Friday, 14 February 2025

Time: 5:00 pm Japan time (JST) - Thailand, Cambodia & Laos PDR: 3 PM, Myanmar: 2:30 PM, Vietnam: 3 PM, Indonesia: 3 PM, India: 1:30 PM, Ghana & Togo: 9 AM (GMT)

Via Zoom
Meeting ID:
620 285 4622
Passcode:
5uch@494

join meeting

Moderator: Prof Yongyut Trisurat, Kasetsart University, Thailand

This webinar is part of the Bimonthly Webinar Series (Jan 2025 – Oct 2026) under the ITTO-BMEL project, "Promoting Quality Timber Production in Smallholder and Community-based Teak and Other Valuable Species Plantations in the Tropics" (PP-A/54-331A).

THÜNEN

TEAKNET

Programme (one hour):

- **Opening remarks:** Ms Jennifer Conje, Director, Forest Management Division, ITTO
- **Presentations:**

Legal and Sustainable Supply Chains: respond to market requirements
Dr Tetra YANUARIADI, Projects Manager, Trade and Industry Division, ITTO

Smallholder Teak and valuable species towards market demands
Dr P.K. Thulasidas, Former Principal Scientist, Kerala Forest Research Institute, India & former TEAKNET Coordinator

Q&A

Prices of Plantation Teak Imported to India

Prices of recent shipments of plantation teak logs and sawn wood imported to India

Sawnwood	cu.m	US$ C&F
Benin	189	710
Brazil	90	650
Costa Rica	170	510
Ghana	149	420
Ivory Coast	138	845
Nigeria	47	415
South Sudan	143	645
Togo	226	495
Panama	241	485

Teak Logs	Hoppus cu.m	US$ C&F
Brazil	123	483
Colombia	92	430
Costa Rica	218	330
Tanzania	117	470
South Sudan	186	685
Guatemala	166	345

Price range depends mainly on length and cross-sections

Courtesy: ITTO TTM Report 29:1 01-15 January 2025

Teaknet Bulletin is a quarterly electronic newsletter of TEAKNET brought out through its website. It is intended for circulation among the members of TEAKNET and other stakeholders of global teak sector. The views expressed in the newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization. The readers are welcome to express their opinions or pass on information of value to teak growers, traders, researchers or others concerned with teak. However, TEAKNET reserves the right to choose the contributions for publishing and also to make necessary editorial modifications in the articles in consultation with the authors.

Address all communications to:

TEAKNET Coordinator
Kerala Forest Research Institute
Peechi-680 653, Thrissur, Kerala, India
Tel: +91 487 2690396; Fax: +91 487 2690111
Email: coordinator@teaknet.org