

# IPE Botanical Information

**Trade or Common Name:** *Ipe, lapacho, cortez, Pau Lope® , ironwood,*  
**Local Name:** *Cortez, cortez amarilla (Ipe is Portuguese for "Hard wood")*  
**Botanical Name:** *Tabebuia spp.*  
**Family:** *Bignoniaceae*  
**Distribution:** *Central & South America*

**The Tree:** Ipe is a large canopy tree, growing to a height of 120 feet in the natural rain forest, with trunk diameter up to 3 feet and a clear bole of 60 feet. Some specimens grow to 150 feet with a 6 foot diameter trunk. Species is widely dispersed and abundant throughout Central and South America

**The Wood:** Ipe heartwood is light to dark olive brown, often with attractive lighter or darker striping and a beautiful grain similar to American walnut. It has a fine texture, medium luster, and a somewhat oily appearance. Ipe is very hard (two to three times as hard as oak), very strong and very heavy. It weighs approximately 70 pounds per cubic foot and sinks in water. Ipe is rated as extremely durable.

**Uses:** Ipe is prized for quality furniture and decorative veneers, and because of its strength and durability, is used in boardwalks, decking, porch floors, tool handles, turnery, industrial flooring, and textile mill items to name a few..

This fantastic and durable South American Hardwood is rated by the US Forest Products Lab for 25 years plus. It is resistant to fire naturally, has a rating of Class A by the NFPA or class 1 by the UBC, and resists insects, moisture, and movement. This wood is perfect for exterior residential and commercial applications such as boat docks, decking, boardwalks, outdoor furniture, etc. It can be sealed to maintain its natural color and beauty, or weathered to a beautiful splinter free silver gray patina.

It has a hardness rating of 3640 Janka, almost 3 times better than that of Red Oak. Ipe is also resistant to surface checking and naturally resistant to molds, insects and decay. When compared to other woods such as redwood, cedar, or copper chromium arsenate pressure treated materials, Ipe lasts much longer (3-5 times the life span), a stronger resistance to fire, insects, weather and movement. By comparison, the value of Ipe is very clearly the best timber product for outdoor usage bar none.

**Cutting and Drilling:** Premium carbide tipped saw blades and high quality carbide drills are recommended for smooth cuts due to the hardness of Ipe. Pre drill a pilot hole and countersink when using screws as fasteners.

**End Sealing:** Ends should be sealed immediately after cutting using a clear aqueous wax end sealer to reduce end checking.

Ipe may be sealed upon installation to reduce the potential of checking. Penetrating oil based finishes are used with Ipe by most installers. Excessive application of oil-based sealers may create a sticky surface and will not enhance or extend their performance. To maintain and keep the rich natural walnut-like color of Ipe, use a pigmented, penetrating oil sealer with UV inhibitors. Reapply as needed, or, if you wish the natural weathering to a silver gray, apply a penetrating oil based sealer during installation and do not reseal... ever. This South American species is a very stable and durable timber. It dries extremely well with little checking, twisting, or bow. It is widely known for its strength and natural resistance to decay and it can be used in ground contact without preservatives or additional treatments. Testing by the US Navy in a Panama Canal study from 1962 showed Ipe to be one of the top performers in resistance to decay, termites, and borers. Of those hardwoods tested it was one of the very few that is commercially available. Extensively used in commercial exterior construction such as boardwalks, piers, and benches, it has recently become the top choice for residential decks due to its low maintenance, attractive color, and very smooth surface and the fact that it lasts over 25 years! It is a heavy timber, approximately 70 lbs. per cubic foot when dry, sinks in water, and has a fire rating of Class A, (the same as concrete or steel).

Uses include: residential and commercial decking, boardwalks, piers, fencing, park benches, any outdoor structures receiving extreme duty.