

XYLARIUM

Xylarium is collection of authentic wood samples. It is a prerequisite for researches in Wood Anatomy. The wood collection maintained at the Forest Research Institute, Dehradun owes its origin to Gamble's fine collection of Indian Woods made for the Paris International Exhibition of 1878. A complete set of these specimens deposited in the museum of the then Imperial Forest School, Dehra Dun formed the nucleus of the present valuable collection. Since then herbarium backed wood specimens are being collected from different forest areas of the country and also from different laboratories all over the world through exchange. At present the Xylarium comprises over 18,000 specimens (8,556 Indian and 10,248 foreign). The collection specializes in tropical timbers particularly South East Asia and Pacific region. Nearly 60 percent of the specimens came from this part of the world. The specimens of Indian collection are arranged family wise following Bentham and Hooker's classification. There is also an excellent collection of microscopic slides for many of these woods which provide a rich source of easily accessible material for research workers.

Brandis (1906) in his 'Indian Tree' has described 4,400 woody species out of which 2,514 are tree species. However at present only about 1,600 species are represented in our Xylarium. The great diversity exhibited by the woody plants is also reflected in their woods. The different woods show a remarkably wide range of variation in their physical properties such as colour texture, weight, hardness etc. as well as in their anatomical structure. In colour, the wood range from almost creamy white to jet black through varying shades of yellow, pink, red, brown & purple. It may be uniform, streaked or variegated. Similarly they may be soft to very soft, hard to very hard. In weight they may be light to very light, heavy to very heavy.

The Xylarium and collection of microscopic slides forms the nucleus of all wood anatomical studies and provides a rich source of easily accessible material for research workers of this Institute and also those of other Institutions and various Universities both from India and abroad.