

## Ipe For Home Furniture

There are many hardwoods that are traditionally used for robust furniture crafting especially for outdoor purposes where the elements can be merciless on them. They include varieties of Oakwood, Teak, Cedar, Redwood, Mahogany and other exotic woods like Narra. But some of these have fallen under the protected or endangered species list and their logging controlled, restricted or banned.

But there's one that tops them all as far as hardness, strength and durability is concerned. That's Ipe. Pronounced eepay, the Ipe is a tropical hardwood tree that grows abundantly all over Central and South America. Ipe is also known as Ironwood, quite an apt alternative name for wood said to be one of the hardest, if not the hardest on earth. It is also known in the vernacular as Pau Lope or Lapacho, and Brazilian Walnut. Ipe generally falls under the *Tabebuia* genus. Its wood is treasured for its strength, durability and resilience against decay, insect infestation and wet conditions. These traits have endeared Ipe as among the top choices for commercial and residential roofing, decking and other construction requirements. The famous Atlantic City boardwalk has wood made from Ipe.

Ipe is less an option for furniture as its hardness makes it difficult to craft into furniture, both indoor and outdoor. Ipe is harder than Hickory, Teak and Cedar – hardwoods prized for their hardness and suitably used in outdoor furniture. Ipe was not a favorite for outdoor furniture until modern building methods have overcome this problem and Ipe wood has started to enter the market for outdoor furniture.

### Wood Properties

**Hardness:** The toughness and hardness of Ipe is quite remarkable. It is more than 3 times harder than Teak wood. And we all know how hard cabinets, stair rails and main house doors made of Teak are. This makes Ipe ideally suited for a number of construction wood requirements as well as outdoor furnishings.

**Density:** Ipe wood is heavy inch for inch compared to other hardwoods. Anything made of Ipe is the heaviest among other similar items made of other wood materials. That's because of its high density properties. It is 40% more dense than Teak wood as measured in the weight per volume unit.

Sources for Wood Measurements – Wood Handbook: Wood as an Engineering Material, US Forest Service; Tropical Timbers of the World, US Forest Service.

### Environment-Friendly

Ipe is a commercially valuable tree but is not an endangered or protected species. Most makers of furniture using Ipe have a certification of approval from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) which is the most respected and credible certifying body on wood sourcing in the world. In other words, using Ipe will not run afoul of the restrictions on logging. And consumers need not worry that they are patronizing the evils of illegal logging of protected tree species. The FSC defines and encourages sustainable forestry logging and replanting practices, which act to counter the exploitative deforestation nature of commercial logging.

## About the Author

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