



Mangkono

(*Xanthostemon verdugonianus* Naves.)

Mangkono, scientifically called *Xanthostemon verdugonianus* Naves., is known to be the hardest Philippine hardwood species. Cutting a 70-cm thick tree with axes normally requires three hours, but cutting a Mangkono tree with the same diameter usually takes two to four days. Diamond-point saws have been used exclusively but a great volume of water is needed to counter overheating.

Because of its inherent hardness and high density, Mangkono has long been recognized as a substitute for the world famous Lignum vitae (*Guaicum officinale* L.). Mangkono is an excellent material for the bearing or stern bushing of a steamship's propeller shaft. Its other uses are as rollers, shears, saw guide blocks, tool handles, novelties, poles and piles for wharfs and bridges, and posts for houses.

Mangkono is a medium sized-tree reaching a diameter of 50 cm or more with a very irregular, fluted and bent bole frequently with epidermic branches. Leaves are simple, relatively thick, alternate, obovate, 8-12 cm long and 3-5 cm wide. Its red inflorescence terminates in a branch. The fruit is dehiscent and



has 2-3 lobes that split into 2-3 sections when ripe, and contain tiny half-moon shaped seeds.

The species is endemic to the Philippines and is known to have a very limited habitat. It is indigenous only within the so-called 'Mangkono Triangle' area, consisting of the Dinagat Island in Surigao, the Homonhon Island in Samar, Babatngon, Leyte, and in Palawan.

Status: Rare and Endangered

– The Research Branch, ARCBC