

Some Details of Wood Species for Violin and Bow Makers

Acacia - *Robinia pseudoacacia* - also called black locust or false acacia - grows in North America and Europe. Used for veneer, carving, and turning. Polishes well.

Air wood - see *Harewood*

Boxwood - *Buxus sempervirens* - Grows in the countries around the Mediterranean, especially in Turkey and the Pyrenees, also in the south of England. This species is more a shrub than a tree, having a mature height of 6' to 8', and is commonly used for hedges. Diameter 12-15 cm.

Buxus sempervirens arborescens (German *Buchsbaum*) - Tree boxwood - is a slightly larger variant, growing up to 10 meters. The wood has a pale yellow color, a fine structure, and is very hard, the heaviest of the European woods. Boxwood is used for pegs, mutes, tailpieces, endbuttons, and chinrests. It is often stained to a pleasant golden brown.

Brasiletta - certain species of *Caesalpinia* that did not produce dyes. The wood is brown, somewhat resembling teak. It comes from West India.
Retford comments (p19 - 20):

It is used for mass produced continental (bow) work; sticks made from this being heavy and strong, but not excessively so. Numbers of students are using bows of this wood. It appears to provide the learner with what he needs. It is not an item in the stock of the English merchant, neither has it been used by English makers.

Brazilwood - *Caesalpinia* spp, originally used as dyewood. The word 'brazil' refers to the red dye. *Caesalpinia sappan* occurs in India, Tonkin, Molucca, China, and Japan. Later, *Caesalpinia echinata* was discovered in South America and became of such importance that the country where it was found was named 'Brazil'. The best quality of Brazilwood was a subspecies called Pernambuco. Today, bows said to be made of Brazilwood may be (lower grade) *Caesalpinia echinata*, or they may be one of the other species of *Caesalpinia* or similar wood.
See also *Bow Materials* chapter

Bulletrie wood - *Manilkara bidentata* - a type of Ironwood. Freshly cut, it has a red color (German *Pferdefleischholz*) which bleaches in the air. Bulletrie is very heavy and hard, and not as elastic as pernambuco. It is used to make bows of second quality .

Other species growing in Guyana and Brazil have also been called bulletrie:

- *Mimusops balata* is the bollet or bullet tree.
- *Swartzia provacensis* (boco) is used for marqueteries and in the fabrication of baroque bows.
- *Swartzia tomentosa* is yellow-orange to red when fresh; the wood then darkens to a rich dark brown that can be mistaken for ebony. It is related to the mangrove tree (*Rhizophora mangle*) growing in West Africa and the American tropics.

Conifer: a cone bearing tree such as a pine or hemlock, also fir, juniper, etc. The evergreen trees or shrubs are characterized by needle-shaped leaves and resinous wood. Wood from conifers is usually called 'softwood'.