

AFRICAN MAHOGANY

WOOD VENEER | SPEC BRIEF

01 – DESIGN OVERVIEW

African mahogany has a warm pinkish-brown heartwood that deepens toward a richer red-brown as it is exposed to light. It provides a classic, warm, and substantial wood character suited to traditional, formal, luxury, and richly detailed architectural interiors.

Its medium-to-coarse texture and generally straight grain offer attractive figure potential. The open grain accepts stains and topcoats well, making mahogany adaptable to a range of warm and deeper finish directions.

DEFAULT CUT

Flat Cut

DEFAULT MATCH

Book Match

PORE STRUCTURE

Medium/Open

RELATIVE COST

Moderate

02 – COLOR & TONE

African mahogany ranges from warm pinkish-brown to medium reddish-brown, with a richness and depth that deepens over time through oxidation and light exposure. The heartwood provides the primary color range, with natural variation in shade and undertone between leaves and flitches.

TYPICAL COLOR RANGE



Warm Pinkish-Brown

Richer Red-brown

SPECIFICATION NOTE

Mahogany's color continues to deepen through oxidation and light exposure. Initial samples may not reflect the long-term installed color. Consider this aging behavior when selecting a finish direction and setting client expectations.

Aging note: African mahogany typically deepens toward a richer red-brown with sustained light exposure. Uneven light exposure across a door group can produce visible color differences over time.

03 – GRAIN & TEXTURE

African mahogany has a medium-to-coarse texture and a generally straight grain, though interlocked grain can produce a ribbon-striped figure in quarter-sliced material. Flat-cut faces introduce cathedral movement and visible warm grain. The open pore structure is a defining characteristic and will remain visible through most finish systems.

SPECIFICATION NOTE | STAIN ABSORPTION

Open pores accept stain readily but create visible pore contrast in the finished surface. Clear or lightly toned stains best preserve depth and figure. Verify that medium-to-dark stains do not over-darken pores or flatten the grain appearance before approving.

Where grain includes interlocked patterns, a ribbon-stripe or ribbon figure may appear—particularly in quarter-sliced material. This is a natural and often desirable characteristic of the species.

SEE ALSO: WALNUT

For a darker, closed-pore alternative with a more contemporary character, see the **Walnut** Spec Brief. For a warm, traditional open-grain appearance, African mahogany is the specification of choice.

02 – CUT OPTIONS

CUT	GRAIN APPEARANCE	TYPICAL USE	KEY CONSIDERATION
Flat Cut DEFAULT	Cathedral and straighter grain with warm, open texture; gentle figure possible	Traditional, formal, warm luxury, and hospitality interiors	Most available; gentle figure; some cathedral movement; open pore character throughout
Rotary	Broad, flowing grain; open texture retained	Cost-effective applications	More grain variation; open pore character; confirm availability
Quarter Sliced	Straighter, striped grain; ribbon figure more pronounced with interlocked grain	Where a linear or ribbon-striped grain expression is desired	Lower yield; ribbon figure not guaranteed; confirm with manufacturer

**Plain sliced is the default and most common specification for cherry. Clear or light finishes are recommended to preserve the species' natural warmth.*



FLAT CUT



ROTARY



QUARTER SLICED

AFRICAN MAHOGANY

05 – NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS TO ANTICIPATE

CHARACTERISTIC	APPEARANCE	GRADE CONSIDERATION
Color Variation	Natural range from light pink-brown to deeper red brown areas	Allowable by grade; define acceptable color range explicitly
Color Streaks	Linear or irregular color changes in the grain direction	Allowable by grade
Mineral Streaks	Darker marks from natural mineral uptake	Allowable by grade; may be more visible with clear or light finishes
Figure	Irregular grain movement or ribbon figure from interlocked grain	Not grade-controlled; can be a valued design feature
Gum Pockets	Small pockets of accumulated natural resin	Allowable by grade; limited at AA; may be visible with clear finish
Cross Bars	Faint horizontal bands crossing grain direction	Natural; cannot be fully eliminated
Barber-Pole Effect	Alternating light/dark leaves in book match	Result of book matching; not a fabrication defect
Small Burls/Pin Knots	Small circular or localized grain features	Allowable by grade; limited at AA

06 – FINISHING

FINISH DIRECTION	EXPECTED BEHAVIOR
Clear/Light Toned	Best preserves depth, figure, and natural warm color; open pore structure and natural grain remain fully visible; lowest risk when the intent is to retain mahogany's rich warmth
Medium Stain	Open pores accept stain readily but may create visible pore contrast; can help minimize color variation between leaves; evaluate on a finished 8"x10" sample before approving
Dark Stain	Can be used but may over-darken pores or flatten the grain appearance; validate with a finished sample that confirms contrast and appearance before approving; recommended only where a deliberate deep tone is the design intent

RECOMMENDED DIRECTION

Clear or lightly toned finishes best preserve African mahogany's depth and natural warmth. Medium-to-dark stains can be effective but should be evaluated carefully to ensure pore contrast and grain appearance remain compatible with the design intent. Review a finished 8"x10" sample before finalizing any stained finish direction.

07 – SPECIFICATION WATCH-OUTS

Critical considerations prior to material release

01

Color deepens over time—initial samples are not a reliable long-term predictor

African mahogany's pinkish-brown heartwood deepens toward a richer red-brown through sustained exposure to light and air. Uneven light exposure—such as differences between well-lit corridor doors and interior office doors—can produce visible color differences within the same installation over time.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE: Discuss expected color aging with the client before finalizing finish selection. Document anticipated color development in the project specification and obtain owner acknowledgment. For installations with mixed sun exposures, evaluate whether a medium stain may provide a more stable long-term color base.

02

Open grain and pore structure are defining characteristics—not limitations

Mahogany's medium-to-coarse, open-pore texture is part of the species' character and will remain visible through most finish systems. Specifiers expecting a smooth, quiet, fine-grained surface may find the open pore structure inconsistent with their design intent. Evaluate a finished sample before specifying.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE: Review a finished sample showing the open pore texture alongside the intended finish before specifying. If a fine, smooth surface is the priority, evaluate whether white maple, natural maple, cherry, or walnut may be better suited to the application and design intent.

03

CITES Appendix II listing requires sourcing verification for Khaya species

African mahogany (Khaya spp.) is listed on CITES Appendix II. Depending on the project's country of origin and procurement requirements, additional sourcing verification and import documentation may be required to confirm legal, responsible-chain-of-custody sourcing.

RECOMMENDED RESPONSE: Confirm sourcing documentation requirements early in the procurement process. Verify that the supplier holds valid chain-of-custody documentation for Khaya. For projects with LEED, WELL, or similar environmental certification requirements, confirm compliance with project-specific responsible-sourcing criteria before specifying.