

## Is Teak Really Mature Enough to be Harvested after 18 Years?

The Teak tree, or *Tectona*, is one of the tropical hardwood birches. It is noted for its strength and ability to withstand even the most challenging weather conditions, which is why it has traditionally been used in fitting out ships. The gleaming brown and dark gold hardwood is of course familiar as indoor and outdoor furniture all round the world. But, like so many other species, teak in the rainforest has fallen victim to over-zealous logging, and there is a ban on cutting down natural timber across much of Asia, which is where teak originated. Teak however continues to be in great demand and its price has increased steadily over the last twenty years.

Teak is an ideal species for plantations because it grows relatively quickly. Seedlings can grow at half an inch a day! The teak flourishes in the rainy season, then during the dry season the trees shed their leaves and their growth slows, allowing the wood to harden.

Growing has usually been propagated through seeds, but there is another way. By using **tissue culture techniques** the cuttings can be taken from the best quality standing trees, and re-produced. By using these latest techniques Teak from Sri Lanka is ready for harvest after about 15 to 18 years.

**Example:** After 18 years an average Teak tree grown seed would only be around 19 inches in diameter across and approximately 59 inches in circumference. **However, an 18 year old Teak tree grown from tissue culture would be around 26 inches in diameter across and approximately 81 inches circumference.**

The most valuable teak trees are those which grow straight and tall with no limbs in the trunk area. By pruning away all except the top third of the leaves, you create superior wood. Also by selecting cuttings from the best performing trees and then growing from tissue culture ensures, with scientific accuracy, that the trees we grow will be top quality. Because teak grows so fast, the plantation needs a lot of attention and maintenance for the first three to five years to ensure optimum results.

This process of pruning and thinning the timber produces an extra source of income for investors whilst the tree is growing. Thinnings are less viable for export, but in Sri Lanka there is a strong local market for young teak, which can be used by craftsmen for making bedroom furniture, cabinets and tables and chairs.

After 18 years an average Teak tree grown from tissue culture would be around 26 inches in diameter across and approximately 81 inches circumference. An 18 year old Teak tree grown from seed would only be around 19 inches in diameter across and approximately 59 inches in circumference.