

魅力之樹
The charming tree

紫檀

Burmese Rosewood

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說起紫檀 (*Pterocarpus indicus*)，大家可能會第一時間聯想到木製傢具。它的木質沉實堅硬，是一種經得起時間考驗的優質木材，十分適合用作傢具原料。加上它的木色赤紅，木紋細緻分明，並帶有玫瑰香味，小如樂器、藝術擺設、飾物，大如傢具、建築樓房，都會選用紫檀作材料，可見其實用價值。大家可能曾在傢具店或老一輩的家中與它有過一面之緣，或是曾買過一兩件紫檀擺設來增加家中的自然氣息，但只見過其成品，沒有真正看見過紫檀，是不能了解紫檀的魅力所在。

The name of Burmese Rosewood (*Pterocarpus indicus*) reminds people of wooden furniture. Its hard, high quality wood can endure the test of time and is ideal for making furniture. In fact, the finely patterned, fragrant reddish wood can be used for making small musical instruments, art objects and decorations as well as large furniture and buildings. You may have seen it in a furniture shop or a family member's home, or even bought items made from it to enhance the sense of nature in your home. But without direct contact with the tree, you can hardly appreciate the charm of Burmese Rosewood.



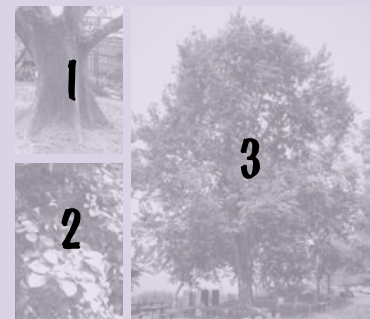
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紫檀屬蝶形花科，是大型落葉喬木，樹幹非常挺直，可長至25米高。紫檀筆直壯大，加上枝條極為繁茂，向上伸展，大大的樹冠呈圓傘形。整株樹宏碩而優美，攝人目光，是紫檀的魅力所在，人們亦愛以它作園林綠化。

紫檀又名「牛血樹」，聽名字好像血淋淋的樣子，所指的其實是紫檀的一種自我保護反應。當紫檀的樹身受到損傷，在受損的部位便會分泌出一種特殊的樹液，由於這些樹液氧化後會變成血紅色，遠看就像流血一樣，因而得名。當樹液流出樹身，便會慢慢凝固，覆蓋住受傷部位，防止樹身受真菌感染或其他損害。

Burmese Rosewood belongs to the Papilionaceae family. The large deciduous tree has a straight trunk that can grow up to 25 metres tall. The huge tree extends upwards with thriving branches and a large, round canopy. With its stupendous tree form, Burmese Rosewood is frequently planted in parks and gardens. Burmese Rosewood is also named “cow’s blood tree” in Chinese. The “blood” refers to its self-protection mechanism. When a tree is injured, special sap is secreted at the wound; this turns crimson upon oxidation. The sap slowly hardens, and safeguards the wound from fungal infection or other damage.



1. 紫檀長有板根，支撐粗壯的樹身。
Burmese Rosewood’s buttress roots support the sturdy trunk.
2. 紫檀會開出鮮黃的花朵，但只綻放數天。
The bright yellow blossoms of Burmese Rosewood last only a few days.
3. 樹冠寬廣，是很好的遮蔭樹。
The large canopy makes Burmese Rosewood an ideal shade tree.

掛在樹上的「太陽蛋」 “Sunny-side egg” on the tree

紫檀的果實是莢果，扁圓的果皮包裹住一至兩粒種子，使中間微微隆起，形如太陽蛋，十分有趣。初生的莢果綠綠嫩嫩，隨著莢果愈來愈成熟，顏色會變得金黃，果皮亦會變得乾硬。當微風吹過，掛在樹上的莢果互相碰撞，隨即發出沙沙的清脆聲響，宛如大自然協奏曲。當果實呈深褐色時便代表已熟透，上下兩片果皮此時會打開，將內藏的種子彈出。

紫檀已列入中國內地《國家重點保護野生植物名錄》，是國家二級重點保護植物。在香港，最老的一株紫檀已有一百七十多歲，屹立於舊香港政府總部正門，見證著香港的百年變遷。當年政府總部興建下層停車場時，為了保存這棵紫檀，特別預留了位置，保留原有泥土，並在外圍築起外牆，讓整株樹猶如種在一個特大花盆。政府總部現已遷往添馬艦，舊政府總部雖然暫時未有重建或其他發展定案，幸好政府已明確表示這株百年紫檀會「原址保留」。



舊香港政府總部正門外的百年紫檀
Hong Kong's oldest Burmese Rosewood,
outside Central Government Offices

The flat fruit pod of Burmese Rosewood is swollen in the middle with one to two seeds, resembling a sunny-side egg. The newly emerged fruit is green, and turns golden yellow on maturing. The pod skin also hardens. When a breeze blows, pods knock against each other, playing the clarion sound of nature. The fully mature fruits are dark brown, and the pods open to eject the hidden seeds.

Burmese Rosewood is a Class II protected species on the List of Wild Plants Under State Protection in China. In Hong Kong, the oldest Burmese

Rosewood is over 170 years old, and is in front of the Central Government Offices. It has long born witness to the Hong Kong history. When the underground car park was built at the Central Government Offices, the tree was specially protected, with the original soil retained within high walls that formed what looked like a giant plant pot. The government has recently moved to Tamar. Although plan for the former site has yet to be formulated, the government has indicated that the venerable tree will be protected “in-situ”.



紫檀的果實
Fruit of Burmese Rosewood