

## Trees 'n' Timber



Ron Allen

### Queensland Walnut *Endiandra palmerstonii*

The May-June edition of the International Wood Collectors Society "World of Wood" magazine contained an interesting article on Queensland Walnut veneer. The author, Rick Banas is an American member and is the General Manager of Interwood Forest Products Inc. (USA). The article refers to the rarity of Queensland Walnut and to the controls governments now impose on its harvesting. Permission was granted to gather 13 logs of this precious tree. The trees were felled and loaded into containers and sent to a first class veneer mill in China for processing. The Australian timber company supervised the cooking, slicing and drying of these veneers. Once completed, the veneers were sent back to Australia for distribution. Interwood Forest Products acquired 50 000 square metres of 'finest Australian Walnut veneers ever seen'. 30 000 square metres were reported to have intense fiddleback figure.

#### **Derivation of names**

*Endiandra* – from the Greek *endon* – within, inside and *andros* – a man, alluding to stamens being the inner part of the flower.

*palmerstonii* – in honour of Australian, H J Palmerston.

*Cryptocarya palmerstonii* is a synonym.

The common name refers to similarity of the colour of the wood to the northern hemisphere walnuts, *Juglens spp.* It also known as Walnut Bean, Australian Laurel, Australian Walnut

#### **The Tree.**

A medium sized, well formed tree to 40 metres with a trunk up to 2.2 metres, usually having a slightly buttressed base although the bole above the buttress is well shaped and without branches for most of its height. It has broad leaves and a fleshy drupe – like that of an olive but up to 60 mm x 50 mm. Queensland Walnut grows in a number of rain forest types and is usually associated with a large number of different tree species. It has a restricted distribution in northern Queensland, between Cardwell and Cairns, a distance of about 150 km.

#### **Timber.**

The colour varies from pinkish brown to dark chocolate brown, often with bands of yellow interspersed. It is harder and heavier than the European walnut, with an air dried weight of 690 kg per cub metre (c.f. Jarrah – 830 kg/cub metre). Because Queensland Walnut has a high silica content, it is very abrasive on tools. It planes well and produces a natural high lustre, but

dulls tools quickly. It slices and peels well for the manufacture of veneers.



#### **Main Uses.**

Once prized for fine cabinet making, its rarity now makes it difficult to obtain. It is now mostly seen as veneer or veneered products. It was used for panelling especially in older railway coaches and trams. In the 1960's I obtained several of those wall mounted telephone boxes (with a separate ear piece and fixed mouth piece that always seemed to be mounted too high) all made from Queensland Walnut and recently purchased a small amount from a deceased estate



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