VESS
VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

Threatened Species Factsheet No. 25

MOLUCCAN IRONWOOD

What are they called?

Scientific: *Intsia bijuga*
Other English:
Borneo/Island Teak
French:
Faux teck
Bislama:
Natora
Vernacular:
Tora (Ambae & Pentacost), Kimau (Efate) among others

A little bit about them:

This large tree is in the Leguminosae or "bean" family. Natora is native to Vanuatu and many island countries ranging from eastern Africa to south-east Asia and western Polynesia. Natora prefers lowland coastal forests in well-drained limestone, swampy or mangrove areas. It can be found up to 450m elevation and is easily grown.

What do they look like?

It's trunk can grow to 1m wide, 7m to 25m tall and has spreading branches. The trunk is usually straight, but often seen leaning in coastal habitat, with peeling bark. Mature trees have wide buttress roots which can reach 4m wide.

The leaves are bright, shiny green and round. The flower is a single white (or pink) petal with long red stamens. The fruit is a brown/green seed pod up to 15cm long.

Source: Ramon L. 2015. *Remarkable plants of Vanuatu*.

Did you know?

- The hardwood timber is very dense and has insect repellent properties.
- This makes it one of the most valuable timbers in South-east Asia.

This species is classified as Vulnerable (VU) by the IUCN Red List.

Why are they threatened?

- Their major threat is logging for timber for use as building material, fuelwood, carving (including handicrafts sold to tourists) and local medicine.
- It has been over harvested in many places in the world
- Very few large populations remain.

What do they do for us?

- This species is a good soil stabiliser, and effective for erosion control.
- Natora provides shelter and nesting sites for birds.
- It is a good coastal protection species as it grows well in swampy coastal areas and tolerates wind and salt spray.

What can we do for them?

- ✓ Establish Community Conservation Areas that nationally protect Natora's natural habitat.
- ✓ Use non-threatened species for building materials where possible.
- ✓ Make sure plantations are managed sustainably. That is, for every mature tree cut down, many new seedlings are planted to replace it and to be used in the future.

Source: Ramon L. & Sam C., 2015. *Remarkable plants of Vanuatu*.

Want to know more?

- Visit: www.iucnredlist.org
- Contact Vanuatu's Department of Forests

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