

*Pinus merkusii*

[Synonyms : *Pinus finlaysoniana*, *Pinus latteri*, *Pinus merkiana*, *Pinus sumatrana*]

**MERKUS PINE** is an evergreen tree. Native to south-eastern Asia (particularly Sumatra now part of western Indonesia, and the Philippines) it has needle-like leaves and glossy reddish-brown cones.

It is also known as *Agu-u* (Filipino/Tagalog), Mindoro pine, Sumatran pine, *Tapulau* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Thông hai lá* (Vietnamese), *Thông nhựa* (Vietnamese), *Tinshu* (Burmese), *Tinyri* (Burmese), and *Tinyu* (Burmese).

The yellowish- to orange-brown heartwood darkens upon exposure to air.

This tree is one of the very few in its genus that is native to an area south of the Equator and it is considered to be endangered in the wild.

*Merkusii* commemorates a Dutch colonial administrator, P. Merkus (1787-1844), who was Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies.

Particularly in Sumatra (now part of Indonesia) merkus pine is a source of turpentine and rosin.

Apparently the tree yields a large quantity of resin and in south-eastern Asia it is in some demand commercially for paint, printing, perfumes and pharmaceuticals.

Merkus pine is cultivated in parts of south-eastern Asia, north Vietnam particularly, in hilly areas prone to erosion and landslides in order to stabilise the soil.

The moderately heavy, resinous wood has been used for general construction, pulp (for paper), housebuilding, shipbuilding and manufacturing vehicles. It has also been made into masts, poles, pit props, cheap furniture, packing cases and matches.