

Sheesham, Acacia, Mango or "Teak"? How Indian Furniture Woods Get Mixed Up



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You often can't tell from the name. Sheesham, acacia and mango look alike once stained and are used as catch-alls, and "teak" can mean teak on the visible faces with something else inside. Much of the teak India imports is plantation-grown in Latin America and West Africa. Write the botanical name for every part into the order, approve unfinished samples of each wood, and check hidden parts at inspection.

The Short Version

- Write the Latin name for every wood part: *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Mangifera indica*, *Tectona grandis*, and the exact *Acacia* species.
- In 2025 India imported US\$273 million of teak logs. Ecuador (27.3%), Brazil (25.8%), Panama (12.4%) and Ghana (10.7%) led.
- A supplier-side voice says "teak" is often teak where visible and something else where it isn't. Ask for a part-by-part wood list.
- The US tariff has a separate line for wooden furniture "of teak", and US Lacey Act declarations need genus and species.
- Approve unfinished, end-grain samples of each wood, because stain makes them look alike.

You often can't tell from the name on the quote. Sheesham, acacia and mango look much alike under a dark stain, and in the trade the names get used as catch-alls. "Teak" can mean teak on the faces you see and a different wood inside. The way to know is to write the botanical name for every part into the order, approve unfinished samples of each wood, and check the hidden parts at inspection.

A US woodworker put the habit in one line in 2023. In the US, he said, you "typically see them labeled as "acacia" or "sheesham" as a catch all" ([r/woodworking, February 2023](#), from our forum signal log). From the supply side, an Indian voice who said they'd supplied furniture to big brands for years wrote that "much of what's sold as "teak" today is actually mixed wood. Teak where it's visible, something else where it isn't" ([r/IndiaBusiness, January 2026](#)). Neither is an accusation against Indian makers as a whole. Many label carefully. It's that the names travel loosely unless you pin them down. Our [wooden furniture from India](#) page covers the towns, duty and border checks, and [timber legality](#) covers the law on each species. This article is about the names themselves. The caveat - we haven't lab-tested Indian furniture for species, so we can't tell you how often names are wrong, only how to find out on your order.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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- 01 **India's imported teak is mostly Latin American.** India imported US\$273.0 million of teak logs (HS 4403.42) in 2025. Ecuador supplied 27.3%, Brazil 25.8%, Panama 12.4%, Ghana 10.7% and Costa Rica 5.6%. In 2024 the total was US\$307.8 million, with Ghana at 12.4%. (*Our analysis of UN Comtrade, India's import records, pulled 18 October 2026 · Verified figures*)
- 02 **The US tariff asks if it's teak.** Wooden furniture under 9403.60.80 has its own statistical line, 9403.60.80.89, "Of teak (*Tectona* spp.)". ([USITC HTS](#), read 18 October 2026)
- 03 **Buyers and suppliers both say species names are used loosely, with "teak"** sometimes only on visible faces. (*Our forum signal log, three threads, 2023 to 2026*)

What we don't know yet

- How much of the teak in Indian furniture is home-grown and how much imported. India's own plantation output isn't in the import data.
- How often a stated species is wrong. We plan to test it with a wood-identification lab on sample orders.

1. Why Do the Names Get Mixed Up?

Because they're trade names, and three of them describe woods that can look alike once finished. The botanical names are the ones that mean something -

Trade name	Botanical name	What to know
Sheesham, Indian rosewood (north)	Dalbergia sissoo	A CITES-listed genus, so it carries permits
Mango	Mangifera indica	Mostly from orchard trees, varies from tree to tree
Acacia	Acacia, a genus with many species	Ask which species, because "acacia" alone isn't one wood
Teak	Tectona grandis	Can be natural forest, plantation, Indian or imported

A medium-brown stain does a lot of levelling. Mango, acacia and sheesham all finish to a warm brown, and on a showroom floor the grain differences are easy to miss. A catalogue photo hides them completely. So the label on a finished piece ends up being whatever the seller wrote, and a buyer who never asked doesn't know.

There's a fair commercial reason the names drift, too. Jodhpur exporters told the press that sheesham fell sharply as a share of their work after export restrictions, and mango and acacia filled the gap, which our furniture page covers. A line that started as sheesham can quietly become something else when the wood changes and the name doesn't.

2. What Is Indian "Teak", Really?

Often imported plantation teak, and more of it Latin American than people think. One Indian forum voice said in 2026 that "most of the teak available here is Nigerian or Ghanaian; softer but has the typical teak grains and colour" ([r/IndiaBusiness, January 2026](#)). That's a single domestic voice, so we checked it against India's own import records.

Our pull of UN Comtrade shows India imported US\$273.0 million of teak logs in 2025. West Africa is there, Ghana with 10.7% and Benin with a smaller share. But Ecuador (27.3%), Brazil (25.8%) and Panama (12.4%) supplied far more, and Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Colombia added more still. Sawn teak imports were much smaller, about US\$39 million, mostly from Ecuador, Papua New Guinea and China. So the forum voice was right that much Indian teak is imported plantation wood and partly right about Africa.

Why does it matter to you? For three reasons. The country of harvest is what timber laws ask about, and "India" may be the wrong answer for teak furniture made in India. Plantation teak can differ in density and look from old-growth teak, so the sample you approve should be from the actual timber stock. And a "teak" price for a piece that is teak only on the top and the visible rails is not a teak piece, however honest the top is.

3. Why Does the Name Matter Beyond the Look?

Because your paperwork repeats it. In the US, the tariff already splits wooden furniture by species, with a statistical line for furniture "of teak (*Tectona spp.*)" ([USITC HTS](#)). A piece entered as teak that isn't is a wrong entry. The Lacey Act declaration asks for "the scientific name of any plant (including the genus and species of the plant)" in the goods ([16 U.S.C. 3372\(f\)](#)). Australia's illegal logging rules and the EU deforestation regulation ask for species and harvest country as well.

Sheesham carries an extra layer. Its genus has been on CITES Appendix II since 2016, and India's 2022 proposal to take sheesham off the list was rejected ([Earth Negotiations Bulletin, CoP19 summary](#)). The permit route for Indian sheesham exports is on [timber legality](#). What matters here is the reverse risk. A piece sold to you as acacia that is actually sheesham has crossed a border without the CITES paper it needed.

4. How Can You Check Which Wood It Is?

Not from a finished, stained sample. Five habits help –

1. **Ask for a part-by-part wood list.** Top, legs, rails, carcass, back, drawer sides and bottoms, with the botanical name and whether each is solid, veneer, plywood or board. An Indian domestic voice noted that shops "say upfront that inside it's engineered wood when you enquire", so the honest answer usually comes when you ask.
2. **Approve unfinished samples of each wood**, cut to show the end grain and the face, and keep them as the reference. Stain only on a separate finish panel.
3. **Look where the finish doesn't reach** at inspection – drawer insides, the underside of a top, the back of a rail. Mixed construction shows there.
4. **Match the timber invoice.** Ask which timber merchant supplied the wood for your order and what species and origin the invoice states. Our [mango wood cracking](#) article covers what to ask about drying while you're there.
5. **Use a wood-identification lab for disputes.** A small block from a hidden spot is usually enough. Ask the lab first what level it can confirm, genus or species, because it varies by wood.

If you'd like someone to check species and timber invoices at the workshop and look inside the pieces before the container is sealed, [SourcingSync](#) does that.

5. What Should the Order Say?

Write the species as a specification, not a description -

- The botanical name of every wood part, with solid, veneer or panel stated for each.
- The approved unfinished sample per wood, numbered and signed.
- The harvest country of each wood, which your timber declarations will need anyway.
- A right to reject or reprice if a hidden part is a different wood from the list.

The [Jodhpur](#) and [Saharanpur](#) pages say which woods each town mostly works with, which tells you what to expect before you ask.

Questions Buyers Ask

Is sheesham the same as rosewood? ^

Sheesham is *Dalbergia sissoo*, sometimes called North Indian rosewood. Indian rosewood in the trade often means *Dalbergia latifolia*, a different species. Use the Latin name.

Is acacia furniture from India a single wood? v

Is Indian teak real teak? v

Can I tell mango from acacia by eye? v