

Scientific Name:

Guaiaecum officinale

Common Name:

- Lignum Vitae
- Guaiaecum
- Tree of Life

Distinct Features:

- **Growth:** A slow-growing, evergreen tree that can reach heights of 10-15 meters. It has a dense, rounded crown and a stout trunk, often with a twisted form.
- **Leaves:** The leaves are simple, alternate, and leathery, measuring about 5-10 cm long. They are oval to elliptical in shape, dark green, and have a glossy surface. The leaves are aromatic when crushed.
- **Flowers:** The flowers are small, fragrant, and typically blue or purple with five petals. They are arranged in racemes and bloom in clusters during the summer.
- **Fruits:** The fruit is a small, woody capsule that contains one or two seeds. When mature, the capsule splits open to release the seeds.
- **Bark:** The bark is thick, rough, and grayish-brown, with a fibrous texture.

Cultural Importance:

- *Lignum Vitae* has a long history of use in traditional medicine and is revered for its medicinal properties. In some cultures, it is considered sacred and is associated with healing and protection.
- The wood has been highly valued for its density, durability, and unique properties, leading to its use in various applications, including shipbuilding and furniture.

Uses:

- **Medicinal:**
 - Traditionally, various parts of the tree have been used to treat a range of ailments, including respiratory conditions, inflammation, and pain relief. The wood and leaves are believed to have anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties.
- **Wood:**
 - The wood is incredibly dense and heavy, making it ideal for use in high-quality furniture, flooring, and boat building. It is also used to make various tools and musical instruments, such as marimbas.
- **Ecological:**
 - The tree provides habitat for various wildlife and contributes to local biodiversity. The flowers attract pollinators like bees.
- **Cultural:**

- The tree is often used in rituals and traditional ceremonies in some cultures, symbolising strength and resilience.

Picture Description:

- **Whole Tree:** A slow-growing evergreen tree with a dense, rounded crown and stout trunk, often twisted in form.
- **Leaves:** Simple, alternate, and leathery leaves that are dark green and glossy, aromatic when crushed.
- **Flower:** Small, fragrant blue or purple flowers with five petals, arranged in racemes.
- **Fruit:** Small, woody capsules that split open when mature, containing one or two seeds.
- **Bark:** Thick, rough, and grayish-brown bark with a fibrous texture.

