TECHNICAL BULLETIN

Black Locust

The question is frequently asked… Is Black Locust an 'Or Equal' substitute for Tropical Hardwood Decking or Lumber?

The U.S. Forest Products Laboratory rates Black Locust as highly durable with good resistance to termites, similar to Ipe, Garapa, and Cumaru. Unfortunately, this is where any claim to being equal ends. Black Locust, as a tree, is not particularly tall or straight, so the lumber the tree generates is not particularly long and tends to be very high in natural defects, unlike the tropical species, which is available in long lengths and virtually defect-free. As a species, Black Locust has a reputation for being high in defects and very dimensionally unstable, tending to warp and twist. Historically, its primary use has been for fence posts, railroad ties, and heavy dimensional applications that reduce the potential for movement in service and where appearance is less important.

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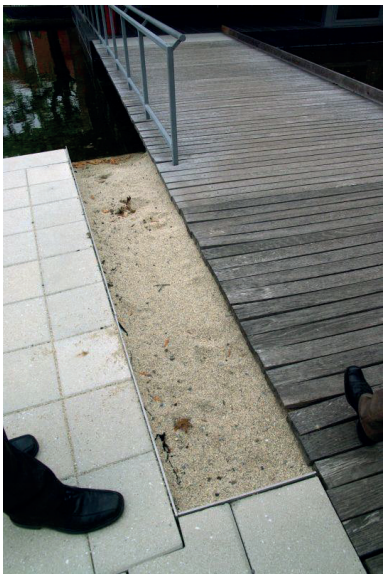
Test strips on New York and New Jersey boardwalks have demonstrated poor performance on the part of Black Locust. A Test Strip Report issued by the City Engineers Office in Ocean City, New Jersey, in 2007 after a two-year evaluation states, "Inconsistent deflection from board to board creates potential trip hazards. Product does not appear to perform better than southern yellow pine and as a hardwood should perform closer to a tropical hardwood." Because of the low level of quality, dimensional instability, and sourcing issues, using Black Locust as a decking, handrail, or site amenity material is impractical. In a 2014 U.S. Army Core of Engineers memo, Black Locust was not recommended for boardwalk reconstruction following Hurricane Sandy.



Mayor Ernest Troiano Jr. said Wildwood turned to Ipe and Cumaru wood because a domestically grown Black Locust wood shipment arrived in unusable condition.

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