

***Chlorocardium rodiei* (Greenheart)**



A member of the family Lauraceae. It is one of two species in the genus *Chlorocardium*, and was formerly classified in either of the genera *Nectandra* or *Ocotea*, as *Nectandra rodiei* or *Ocotea rodiei*. Other local names include *sipiri*, *bebeeru* and *bibiru*. It is native to northern South America, chiefly in Guyana (formerly British Guiana).

It is an evergreen tree growing to 15–30 m tall with a trunk diameter of 35–60 cm. The leaves are opposite, simple, with an entire margin. The fruit is a drupe containing a single seed.

The cyclic bisbenzylisoquinoline alkaloid rodiasine was first isolated from this species.

The wood is extremely hard and strong, so hard that it cannot be worked with standard tools. Being extremely durable in marine conditions, Greenheart is used extensively in the building of docks and in similar applications and was an early choice for fly fishing rods.

Greenheart is listed on the IUCN Red list (1996) as Vulnerable. Between 15 and 28% of the original population has been harvested to date. Harvesting as a commercial timber began in the late 18th century, but most of the harvesting has only taken place since the introduction of chainsaws in 1967.

The Fram and the Endurance, the two strongest wooden ships ever constructed and made famous in the polar expeditions of Amundsen and Shackleton, were sheathed in greenheart to prevent the ships from being crushed by ice.

Greenheart wood is often sought for construction projects in parts of the Caribbean where Wood ants are seen as a problem for conventional pine wood construction.