

OLACACEAE

PETIKAL - PETALING. (*Ochanostachys amentacea* Mast.)

Petikal, or *petaling* as it is sometimes called, as it is also in the Malay Peninsula, is scattered throughout our lowland forests, but large trees are very few and far between. It is of practically no commercial importance, but the timber has some purely local value.

A tree of small or moderate size, often of rather poor shape, sometimes attaining a girth exceeding 6 feet but rarely, if ever, reaching the upper storey of virgin forest, the stem without buttresses but sometimes fluted, the crown dense and dark, and consisting of many small branches. Bark brown with a purplish tinge, smooth and shedding in thin, irregular flakes to expose light-coloured patches, so that the whole stem is characteristically mottled; about 1/3" thick, the outer bark very thin, green, inner bark brownish yellow and fibrous, becoming lighter towards the cambium and separated from the wood by a purplish line. Leaves simple, spiral, without stipules, smooth and leathery, 3" to 5" long and 1 1/2" to 2 1/2" wide, elliptic to oblong and bluntly tipped, with 5 pairs of nerves which are rather prominent on the lower surface, the stalk up to 3/4" long; saplings have larger leaves. Flowers small and numerous, greenish, borne on loose spikes rising from the axils of the leaves. Fruit an oblong berry, up to 1 1/2" long, light green and fleshy.

The tree.

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The leaves are rather similar to those of *bawang hutan*, but otherwise there is little resemblance between the trees and *petikal* has no smell of garlic. The bark, which is a patchwork of dark brown and yellowish, is usually very distinctive.

Silvicultural characteristics.

Petikal demands good drainage and is usually found on undulating ground or low hills, up to an altitude of about 1,800 feet, but otherwise it is rather tolerant of poor soil conditions. It is an evergreen shade-bearer of the lower storeys in natural forest, and the rate of growth is slow; in the Malay Peninsula it apparently normally takes about 150 years to reach a girth of 5 feet, although individual annual girth increments of as much as 1.3" have been recorded. Natural regeneration is often fairly plentiful where conditions are suitable, and the tree also reproduces itself by means of coppice shoots and root suckers.

SUN
IN BEARS

Petikal is much frequented by bears, whose claw-marks are often to be seen on the bark. This might suggest that it is a "bee tree", but it has no such reputation among the natives tribes. *Prob. after the fruit.*

The wood.

The wood is hard and heavy, usually varying between 50 and 60 lb. per cubic foot air-dry. Texture fine and even. Sapwood pinkish or yellowish, heartwood dark purplish red-brown. Growth rings not evident; pores small and numerous, arranged in short radial groups; soft tissue arranged in fine lines between the rays and forming a ladder-like pattern, but usually very inconspicuous; rays very fine, numerous and straight. Structurally the wood is very similar to *bawang hutan*, but the pores are even smaller and it has no garlic or peppery smell.

Petikal logs, which sink in water, are usually fairly sound. The timber is not unduly difficult to saw and work, but care is required in seasoning to prevent splitting. It is as strong as *bawang hutan*, and is reputed to be resistant to infestation by termites, but it is less resistant to fungi and is extremely difficult to impregnate with preservatives. Unlike *bawang hutan* it cannot be recommended for use in water, but it is suitable for heavy interior construction and is locally popular for native house-posts. It is too scarce in large dimensions to be of commercial importance.