



Almedro (*Dipteryx panamensis*)

FAMILY: Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES: almendro, almendro de montaña

Description: A tall forest tree with an immense, straight trunk with rounded buttresses. At Barro Colorado, the tallest tree measured to date -- 52.7 m -- was this species. The bark is yellow colored and densely granular. Leaves are compound, usually with 11-13 leaflets that alternate with one another; often, the leaf rachis (carrying the leaflets) extends beyond the last leaflet. The leaflets are asymmetric, with the leading half wider than the trailing half. The petiole and leaf rachis are winged, although the wings are narrow.

Flowers and fruits: *Dipteryx* is irregularly deciduous towards the end of the dry season, with some trees losing most of their leaves. Flowers are purple, pea-like, produced above the foliage in June; they are conspicuous at a distance. Fruits have a single, hard seed with a thin layer of brown pulp surrounding it; they are typically found on the ground with the pulp gone, and often with a hole chewed in the wall. During December and January, this tree's seeds are a staple for mammals at Barro Colorado Island; the agoutis can frequently be heard gnawing at the seeds at the base of the big *Dipteryx*.

Distribution: A conspicuous canopy emergent at Barro Colorado and Soberania, where it is fairly common. Rarely at other sites on the Atlantic. Not known south of Soberania, and not seen along roads or in open areas.

How to recognize: A conspicuous and oft-studied tree at Barro Colorado, it is easy to learn either from the trunk, with yellowish bark, or the very distinctive leaves. Beneath big trees, the leaf rachis can usually be found, and recognized from the small wing even if the leaflets are fallen.

Uses: The wood is hard and valuable for a variety of constructions purposes. *Dipteryx* grows fairly rapidly in open areas, and has been tested in plantation in Costa Rica.