

## Kebony vs. Ipé

---

Between increased fires in the Amazon Basin and illegal harvesting, it's time to start looking for alternatives for Ipé. How does Kebony stack up against Ipé and other Brazilian hardwoods? We are going to look at five main characteristics of Kebony vs. Ipé.

### Durability

---

Ipé has always been known for its strength, being branded as "Iron Wood" by some importers. There's no doubt Ipé is extremely durable, in terms of hardness, the Brazilian hardwood is more than twice as hard as Kebony Clear on the Janka hardness test. Ipé is also touted as lasting 75-100 years; that's a long time!

#### How strong is too strong?

Kebony is not as hard as Ipé, but does it need to be? Kebony does come with a 30-year warranty and is still as hard as other Brazilian Hardwoods. Ipé's density makes it extremely hard to work with, so be prepared to pre-drill and buy extra carbide-tipped saw blades. The biggest advantage Kebony has over Ipé is in stability. Kebony's modification process makes it very resistant to warping, cupping and splintering, which is a common problem with any tropical hardwood that leads to added waste.

**Winner:** Ipé for density, Kebony for stability and warranty

### Appearance

---

Kebony Clear and Ipé are very similar in appearance. Both have a rich brown color, and both will naturally fade to a nice light gray unless regularly oiled. Both products also have a clear and straight grain pattern. The difference in Kebony and Ipé is the consistency. Kebony has a very uniform color and grain pattern, where Ipé will have variations in color and grain. Ipé has varying grades as well, so know what you are getting before it arrives.

**Winner:** Kebony for its uniformity

## Maintenance

---

Both products have nearly identical maintenance routines. If you would like Kebony or Ipé to patina to a silver/gray, then little to no maintenance is required. Just let nature run its course. If you would like to keep the lustrous brown color of either product, regularly use a UV inhibiting Hardwood Oil. With Ipé, the extreme density of the wood means the Hardwood Oil won't soak into the wood, so be sure to back wipe excess oil within 15 minutes of application. Kebony will require some back wiping, but the oil will also soak into the wood.

**Winner:** Tie

## Environmental Impact

---

This area is where Kebony and Ipé differ the most. Kebony is sustainably harvested from FSC®-certified forests. Because Kebony uses responsibly managed lumber and eco-friendly chemicals, it is an incredible green product: perfect for gaining LEED points for a project. Ipé? Well, that all depends on the mill. Unless the importer visits the sawmills personally, it's hard to know whether or not your Ipé was illegally harvested. Even if the rainforest is properly managed, Ipé trees take 80-100 years to mature. One thing is certain: Ipé is not sustainable and the supply of Ipé in the Amazon will eventually run out in the distant future. Ipé could even end up on the CITES Appendix II List in the next several years, making it very hard to harvest.

**Obvious Winner:** Kebony

## Value

---

A price comparison will vary depending on region. Generally speaking, 5/4x6 Kebony Clear decking is priced right in between 1x6 Ipé and 5/4x6 Ipé. The added benefit of Kebony is it comes in premium lengths like 12' and 16' at no additional charge, so you can get the best lengths for your project without paying extra. For most of the country, Ipé will have a 10-20% upcharge for 12', 16' and 20' lengths, and many retailers will steer you towards shorter or random lengths to keep your cost down. For exact numbers you can consult your local lumberyard.

**Winner:** Kebony for price consistency

## The Verdict

---

It's time to rethink whether you REALLY need Ipé on your next project, because there is a clear-cut alternative: Kebony.