



Nakshatra Vanam

The Indian Blackberry Tree



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Botanical Name:	<i>Syzygium cuminii</i> Linn. Skeels
Tamil Name:	Naval
Sanskrit Name:	Jambu
English Name:	Indian blackberry
Nakshatram:	Rohini

Habit

Syzygium cuminii is a medium-size evergreen tree 10-30 m high, with a straight to crooked, short, stout trunk, 40-100 cm in diameter, attaining a height of 13-20m. Crown is irregular or globular with many branches. Bark up to 2.5 cm thick, brown or dark grey. Leaves are entire with narrow transparent margin, long, broad, opposite, thick, coriaceous, glabrous, broadly obovate. Flower clusters on old twigs at the back of leaves, flowers white or pink, many, small. Fruits are ovoid-oblong or elliptical berries, numerous, crowded in clusters.



Medicinal Uses

The jamun fruit and jamun leaves are good for diabetes. The black plum has anti-diabetic features. The decoction of the bark is used as a mouthwash and to treat spongy gums. Jamun seeds are used as an effective agent to treat acne. The jamun fruit is loaded with sugars like glucose and fructose along with lesser calories. People suffering from anemia and jaundice should take jamun because of its high iron content and vitamin C. The juice extracted from the seed is taken to reduce sugar in urine. Chewing and eating of jamun leaves are good in treating diarrhea, ulcers and digestive related disorders.

Other Uses

This tree is planted mainly for providing shade. The wood is hard and durable and is used as fuel-wood and for making agricultural implements. The fruit is at first green in colour and later turns into a dark purple coloured edible fruit (*Sacred Trees of Tamil Nadu*, 2005). The leaves assimilate more of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and liberate oxygen, thus balancing

oxygen in the atmosphere. (Singh and Rao, 1983) reported that this tree is pollution tolerant. Jamun leaves are used as tooth powder and helps in checking gum infection and bleeding.

Religious Association

The jamun has been regarded as the sacred tree in India. The tree is sacred to Lord Shiva, Krishna and Ganesha. While the fruit is an Emblem of Tarana-Ganapati, it is also associated with Venus, the Goddess of Love. The Shiva lingam which stands in Jumbukeswaram in Thiruvanaikkaval is called Vamadeva lingam. This tree is held in veneration by the Buddhists. Buddha Kapilavastu was closely associated with this tree. The thirteenth Jaina Tirthankara, Vimalanatha obtained his divine knowledge under this tree. *Syzygium cuminii* tree is also associated in the science of astrology under the constellation *Rohini* (*Sacred Trees of Tamil Nadu*, 2005).



Mythology



The god Megh is said to have been transformed into a jambu tree. The colour of the fruit being like that of Krishna, this plant is worshiped and Brahmins are fed under the tree. The leaves are used as platters for pouring liberation (Lisboa, *Useful Plants of Bombay*). The jamun tree is described in the Mahabharata as a cosmic tree standing to the South of Mount Meru, the axis of the Universe. When the ripe fruit of this gigantic tree burst, the juice fell as a waterfall, forming a river which became the boundaries of a land known as Jambudwipa, or the continent of the jambu trees,

populated by epic heroes who gained immortality by drinking the juice. The juice of the ripe fruits that fell down flowed to form a stream known as the Jambunadi. Although the jamun tree receives no ostensible worship, it is still invoked at formal Indian rituals, which always commences with the words: "In the continent of the Jamun trees, where the land of India lies". (Naveen Patnaik, 1993).
