



Nakshatra Vanam

SWATHI

Arjuna Tree



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Botanical Name:	<i>Terminalia arjuna</i> Wt & Arn
Tamil Name:	Marudham
Sanskrit Name:	Arjuna
English Name:	Arjun

Habitat:

The tree is native to India, and it attracts a lot of attention because of its association with mythology and its many uses. Arjuna is a large, evergreen tree with a spreading crown and drooping branches.

It grows up to a height of 25 m and the bark is grey and smooth. The leaves are sub-opposite, 5-14 × 2-4.5 cm in size, oblong or elliptic oblong. The flowers are small, white and occur on long hanging racemes. The fruit is 2.3-3.5 cm long, fibrous woody, glabrous and has five hard wings, striated with numerous curved veins. The flowering time of the tree is April – July in Indian conditions. It is a suitable plant to grow in alkaline soil.

Medicinal uses and benefits

The tree contains many useful properties. For example, the bark of the tree contains calcium salts, magnesium salts and glycosides which have many uses in Ayurvedic medicine. The juice of the leaf is useful in the treatment of dysentery and earache. The bark of the tree is helpful in maintaining cholesterol level at the normal. This is because it contains antioxidant properties which are similar to Vitamin E. It also acts to strengthen the heart



muscles and thus maintains the functioning of the heart at the normal level. It is also used in the treatment of heart disease, heart failure, angina and hypercholesterolemia.

The bark of the tree has the diuretic, prostaglandin enhancing and coronary risk factor modulating properties. It is also used in the treatment of asthma. Another use is as an anti-ischemic and cardio protective agent in hypertension and ischemic heart diseases, especially in disturbed cardiac rhythm, angina or myocardial infarction. It is also used as a diuretic and general tonic for treatment of cirrhosis of the liver.



Bark of the tree

Temples associated with the Arjuna tree:

<i>District</i>	<i>Village/Town</i>	<i>Temple</i>	<i>Deity</i>
Coimbatore	Marudhamalai	Dandayudhapani	Muruga
Cuddalore	Tiruidaiyaru	Marudeeswarar	Shiva
Sivaganga	Pillaiyarpatti	Karpagavinayaga	Vinayaka
Tanjavur	Tiruvidaimarudhur	Mahalingeswarar	Shiva

(Source – Sacred Trees of Tamil Nadu – 2005 by M. Amirthalingam)

Religious Association



Fruits of the tree

The Sanskrit name of the tree is Arjuna which means white. It is the name of the hero of the Mahabharata who was an apotheoses human hero as was Vasudeva (Krishna's father) (Stutley, 1985). The Arjuna trees are also associated in the science of astrology under the constellation *Swathi*.

Mythology/ Folklore

In Indian mythology, Arjun is supposed to be Sita's favourite tree. According to the *Bhagavatha purana*, the rishi Narada cursed Nalakubera and Mangriva, the son of the *yaksha* king Kubera, the God of Wealth, to become an Arjuna tree. After one hundred celestial years, the touch of Sri Krishna rid them of their sins. This tree always grows on the banks of rivers, lakes and in areas near water.

Arjuna is one of the sacred trees of India. It has acquired the social and religious sanctity with the passage of time. It is said that Arjuna has been born of the two sons of Kubera after saint Narada cursed him. The leaves and flowers of this tree are offered to Lord Vishnu and Lord Ganapati on several religious occasions. It has been used in Ayurvedic formation since ancient times.

Conclusion

It is a dry evergreen tree with a broad crown and shallow roots. Generally it grows along the river valleys and plains up to an altitude of 1200m. However, in recent times, local communities have started cutting the Arjuna trees that grow in the river valleys and lake side for its high value of timber. Hence there is an urgent need for reforestation of this species. Its wood is used in boat and house building as it is very hard. Economically, its wood is also used in the making of agricultural implements and weapons too. It is grown in the cities and towns for the purpose of shade. The whole tree provides shade and shelter for bats and humans too.

