



## Nakshatra Vanam

### Karthigai (Krittika) & Hasta Cluster Fig Tree



**M. Subramanian**  
Project Officer

C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre  
Chennai

**Botanical Name:** *Ficus racemosa* L.

**Tamil Name:** Atthi

**Sanskrit Name:** Udumbara

**English Name:** Cluster fig

#### Habitat

Deciduous trees, rise up to 30 m high; bole buttressed; bark 8-10 mm thick, surface reddish-brown or yellowish-brown smooth, coarsely flaky, fibrous; blaze creamy pink; latex milky; young shoots and twigs finely white hairy, soon glabrous; branch-lets 1.5-3 mm thick, puberulous. Leaves are simple, alternate, stipules 12-18 mm long, lanceolate, linear-lanceolate, pubescent, often persistent on young shoots; petiole 10-50 mm long, slender, grooved above, becoming brown scurfy; lamina 6-15 x 3.5-6 cm, ovate, obovate, elliptic-oblong, elliptic-lanceolate, elliptic-ovate or oblong-ovate, base acute, obtuse or cuneate, apex narrowed, blunt or acute, margin entire, membranous, glabrous, blistered



appearance on drying; 3-ribbed from base, 4-8 pairs, slender, pinnate, prominent beneath, intercostae reticulate, obscure. Flowers unisexual; inflorescence a syconia, on short leafless branches or warty tubercles of trunk or on larger branches, subglobose to pyriform, smooth, often lenticellate-verrucose; peduncle 3-12 mm long, stout, orifice plane or slightly sunken, closed by 5-6 apical bracts; internal bristles none; basal bracts 3, 1-2 m long, ovate-triangular, obtuse, persistent; flowers of unisexual, 4 kinds; male flowers near the mouth of receptacles, in 2-3 rings, sessile, much compressed; tepals 3-4, dentate-lacerate, lobes jointed below, red, glabrous; stamens 2, exserted; filaments 1 mm, connate below; anthers oblong, parallel; female flowers sessile or very shortly stalked among gall flowers; tepals 3-4, dentate-lacerate, lobes jointed below, red, glabrous, ovary superior, sessile or substipitate, red spotted; style 2-3 mm long, glabrous, simple; stigma clavate; gall flowers long stalked; ovary dark red, rough; style short. Syconium 2.5 x 2 cm, orange, pink or dark crimson; achene granulate (India Biodiversity Portal.com).

## Religious Association

Several temples are associated with the Cluster fig tree as Sthala vriksha. There is an ancient tree, may be 75 years old located in the Sri Uma Maheshwar Temple at Mangalore. It belongs to the Udumbara figs species and is the sthala vriksha of the temple. It is worshipped by the devotees and is very well decorated on festival days. (Prakruti-mothernature.blogspot.in 2011). In Tamil Nadu, religion and culture have preseeded biodiversity since many centuries. This practice goes back to the Vedic period (Vanadevatas). In fact, Sthala vrikshas came to be worshipped as the home of gods and goddesses. A good example is the fig tree at the Varadaraja Perumal Temple, Kanchipuram (P. Sudhakar, 2016). The Cluster fig tree has also long been associated with the subject of astrology under the constellation Karthigai and Hasta.



## Medicinal uses and other benefits

The decoction of the bark of the fig tree with 3 gm catechu and 1 gm phitkari may be used to cure mouth disorders. This is used for gargling and is very useful for treatment of mouth problems. For treatment of chicken pox take the eruptions of cluster fig leaves mix and grind in milk. Strain the milk, mix with honey and give to the patients twice a day. This helps to prevent pus in the boils. For treatment of stomach pain, give the fruits of the country fig to the patients. For the pitta problems take leaves of country fig, grind into paste and mix with honey and give to patients. For treatment of bronchitis and bronchial asthma, take the fruits, make into squash and administer to the patients regularly especially in summer. For urinary disorders, take the peel of the fruit, dry them and then grind into a fine powder with equal amount of sugar candy. Administer to the patients 6.5 gram added with cow's milk twice a day ([www.theayurveda.org](http://www.theayurveda.org)).

## Conclusion

This tree grows to a good height and is fast growing. It can tolerate drought and it requires moderate drainage. It can be planted anywhere like bordering fields, avenues, road side, wet area, temples, houses, etc. Sacrosanct plants play a very important role in environment. They provide food, shelter and nesting substratum for several species of birds and squirrels. This plant is well protected in India. It is a keystone resource, playing an important role in the conservation of many species (P. Sudhakar, 2016). Among the most sacred trees of India are peepal, cluster fig, white fig, banyan and mango. These are used in all religious functions and community feasts (M.Amirthalingam, 2013). It is therefore necessary to propagate this tree since the fruit is rich in iron content. It can be easily grown in individual houses and can be easily planted.

