



Herbal Garden (Muligai Vanam)

Cotton Candy Berry



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Botanical Name	:	<i>Muntingia calabura</i> L.
Tamil Name	:	Then pazham/Sarkarai pazham
English Name	:	Cotton candy berry/Strawberry Tree

Distribution and Habitat

Muntingia calabura belongs to the family Muntingiaceae. It is widely grown in the tropics and subtropics worldwide. The plant is widely cultivated in warm areas in India and Southeast Asia and also commonly cultivated as roadside trees used as an air pollution tolerance indicator.



It is a small and fast-growing tree which flowers throughout the year and can reach up to 12-15 m height with spreading branches. Leaves soft, evergreen, alternate, 4-15 cm long, 1-6 cm wide, lanceolate, oblong with toothed margin oblique at the base, minute hair at upper surface. Flowers small, sepals green, petals white, stamens yellow. Fruits small berries, abundant, 1.5 cm wide, green, red or yellow, thin, smooth, tender skin, soft, juicy pulp, sweet, musky, fig-like in taste, contains thousands of small yellow seeds with a diameter of 0.5 mm.

Parts used: Leaf, bark, flowers, fruit

Phyto-chemicals

Amino acids, flavonoids, saponins, proteins, triter-penoids, sterols, steroids, alkaloids, poly phenolic compounds, glycosides, and carbohydrates

Uses

The tree provides food and shelter for various wildlife, including birds, bats, and small mammals. Flowers attract bees and butterflies, contributing to the pollination cycle. Fruits are edible and can be consumed fresh or used in jams and drinks. The leaf infusion is taken as a tea-like beverage.

Medicinal uses

Muntingia calabura is a valuable plant in traditional medicine, particularly in Ayurvedic and folk medicine practices. The plant is traditionally used to reduce pain from gastric ulcer. They emergence of various types of diseases, both infectious and non-infectious. It is proven to have many pharmacological activities like anti-inflammatory activity, antipyretic activity,



antiulcer activity, anti-diabetic activity, anti-hypertensive activity, cardio-protective activity, anti-bacterial activity, insecticidal activity and anti-oxidant activity (Mahmood et al. 2017). Fruits and leaves are rich in antioxidants due to the presence of phytochemical compounds like phenolic, flavonoids, and tannins. These compounds help protect against oxidative stress and cell damage. The plant extracts have pain-relieving and fever-reducing properties, suggesting its potential use in managing pain and fever (Mohini et al. 2021). The leaves may help reduce uric acid levels and alleviate gout symptoms. Leaves are used to treat gastric



ulcers, swelling of the prostate gland, headache, and cold, also it exhibit potential anti-proliferative and antioxidant activities. Flowers are used as antiseptics, antispasmodics, and to relieve headache and cold symptoms (Singh et al. 2017). Flowers are also made into medicinal teas. Bark is used to reduce swelling in lower extremities and as an antiseptic. Fruits are used to treat measles, mouth pimples, and stomach aches. They possess potent anti-inflammatory activity.

Photo link: https://www.knowyourweeds.com/en/weeds/Muntingia_calabura

