

Bombax ceiba

Common name: Silk Cotton Tree, Kapok Tree, Shalmali, Semal

Family: Malvaceae

Habit: Tree

Location: Science Block (Near Virsa Ghar)

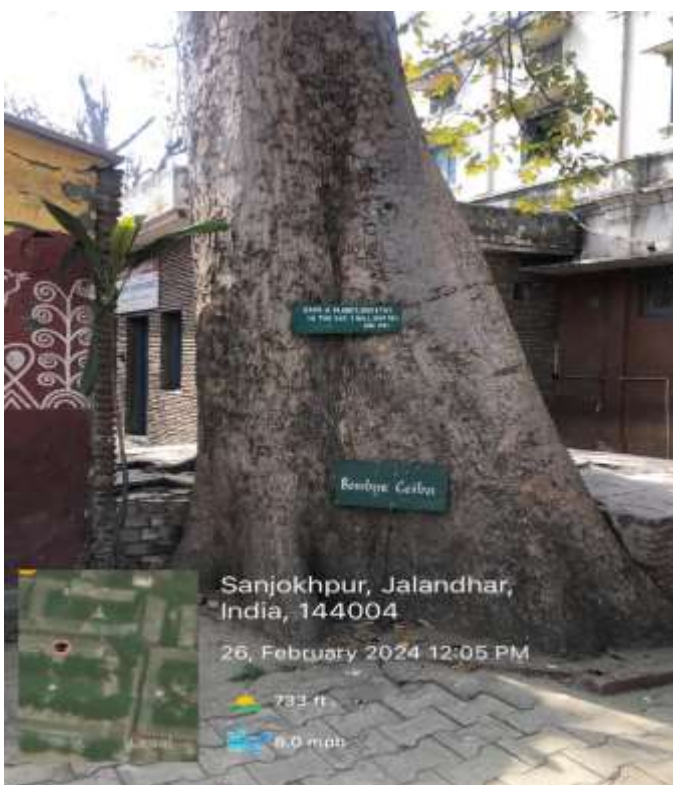
Distribution: Silk cotton trees comprise eight species in the genus *Bombax*, native to India, tropical southern Asia, northern Australia and tropical Africa. This tree is quite common in New Delhi.

Description:

Bombax ceiba grows to an average of 20 meters, with old trees up to 60 meters in wet tropical regions. The trunk and limb bear numerous conical spines particularly when young, but get eroded when older. The leaves are palmate with about 6 leaflets radiating from a central point (tip of petiole), an average of 7–10 cm wide, 13–15 cm in length. The leaf's long flexible petiole is up to 20 cm long. Cup-shaped flowers solitary or clustered, axillary or sub-terminal, fascicles at or near the ends of the branches, when the tree is bare of leaves, an average of 7–11 cm wide, 14 cm in width, petals up to 12 cm in length, calyx is cup-shaped usually 3 lobed, an average of 3–5 cm in diameter. Staminal tube is short, more than 60 in 5 bundles. The stigma is light red, up to 9 cm in length, ovary is pink, 1.5–2 cm in length, with the skin of the ovary covered in white silky hair at 1mm long. Seeds are numerous, long, ovoid, black or gray in colour and packed in white cotton. The fruit, which reaches an average of 13 cm (5 in) in length, is light-green in color in immature fruits, brown in mature fruits.

Uses:

Fruit fibers called "kopak" is used for filling economically priced pillows, quilts, sofas etc. The fruit is cooked and eaten and also pickled. Wood is popular for construction work, but is very good and prized for manufacture of plywood, match boxes and sticks, scabbards, patterns, moulds, etc. Also for making canoes and light duty boats and or other structures required under water. *Bombax* species are used as food plants by the larvae of some *Lepidoptera* species including the leaf-miner *Bucculatrix crateracma* which feeds exclusively on *Bombax ceiba*.





LEAVES



FLOWER



FRUIT