

Ficus religiosa

Common name: Peepal, Holy Fig Tree, Sacred Fig Tree

Family: Moraceae

Habit: Tree

Location: Hostel, Botanical garden, Central Lawn

Distribution: *Ficus religiosa* is native to most of the Indian subcontinent – Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and India including the Assam region, Eastern Himalaya and the Nicobar Islands, as well as part of Indochina – the Andaman Islands, Thailand, Myanmar and Peninsular Malaysia. It has been widely introduced elsewhere, particularly in the rest of tropical Asia, but also in Iran, Florida and Venezuela.

Description:

Ficus religiosa is a large dry season-deciduous or semi-evergreen tree up to 30 metres (98 ft) tall and with a trunk diameter of up to 3 metres (9.8 ft). The leaves are cordate in shape with a distinctive extended drip tip; they are 10–17 cm (3.9–6.7 in) long and 8–12 cm (3.1–4.7 in) broad, with a 6–10 cm (2.4–3.9 in) petiole. The fruits are small figs 1–1.5 cm (0.39–0.59 in) in diameter, green ripening to purple. *F. religiosa* has a lifespan ranging between 900 and 1,500 years. The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi tree in the city of Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka is estimated to be more than 2,250 years old.

Uses:

Ficus religiosa is grown by specialty tree plant nurseries for use as an ornamental tree, in gardens and parks in tropical and subtropical climates. It is used in traditional medicine for about fifty types of disorders including cough, asthma, diabetes, diarrhea, toothache, haematuria, migraine, scabies, epilepsy, gastric problems, inflammatory disorders, infectious and sexual disorders. Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment while meditating underneath a *Ficus religiosa*. The earliest known record of *Ficus religiosa* in human culture is the use of peepal leaf motifs in the pottery. It is considered sacred by the followers of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.



