PLANT FACT SHEET

Ficus benghalensis L.

GENUS *Ficus* **FAMILY** Moraceae

COMMON NAMES Banyan Tree, Indian Banyan

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Stems

The ripe figs are eaten raw or cooked as a vegetable. They are sweet. They can also be dried.
The young shoots are used as a famine food.
The young leaves are eaten as a vegetable and are a famine food.

DESCRIPTION

A fig. It is an evergreen tree. It grows to about 35 m high. It has a spreading canopy. The branches have many aerial roots. They are like thick columns. They grow down from the spreading branches. These support the widely spreading crown. One tree can be 60 m wide. The bark is pale grey. The leaves are alternate and stalked. They are 10-20 cm long by 5-12.5 cm wide. They are oval and rounded at the base. They are deep green above and paler underneath. They are also hairy underneath. They are thick and leathery. The flowers are very small and inside the fig. The figs grow between the upper part of the leaf stalk and stem. The figs are round and scarlet when ripe.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. In Nepal it grows up to 1400 m altitude. They are common over the plains of India. The grow wild in the sub-Himalayan forests. It is a tropical plant. It can tolerate frost. It can grow in arid places. It is moderately salt tolerant. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds or cuttings. Young branches should be used for cuttings. Cuttings root easily. One famous tree in Calcutta covers 1.6 ha.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In India fruit are available June to September.

NOTES

There are about 800-1000 Ficus species. They are mostly in the tropics. There are 120 Ficus species in tropical America. This tree is sacred to Hindus.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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