

WEST BENGAL

State Flower: Seuli, Sefalika (Bengali)

Botanical Name: *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L.

Family: Oleaceae

Vernacular Names: Coral Jasmine, Night Jasmine (English); Harshringara, Harsingar (Hindi); Parijatha (Sanskrit); Parijatham (Tamil)

Etymology: *Nyctanthes* means night flowering; *arbor-tristis* means sad tree, as it loses its brightness during daytime.



***Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L.**

[Courtesy: Vijay Mastakar]

Description: It is a large shrub grows up to 10 m tall. It has fleshy and grey bark. Stems and branches are 4-angled and hairy. Leaves are simple, opposite, ovate, 6 – 12 × 2 – 6.5 cm with rounded or cuneate base, entire or coarsely toothed at margins, and acute to acuminate at apex. Flowers are white, fragrant, arranged in terminal and axillary trichotomous cymes. Calyx is narrowly campanulate (bell-shaped). Corolla lobes white with an orange-coloured tube. Fruits are heart-shaped

to obovoid, flat and brown-coloured capsules with orbicular seeds.

Flowering & Fruiting: Flowers bloom almost throughout the year, open at dusk and fall at dawn.

Range of Distribution: The plant is native to India, and widely distributed from sub-Himalayan regions to southern most part of India. It is often cultivated in gardens and in the premises of Hindu temples, for its fragrant flowers. It is also widely distributed in South and Southeast Asia (Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Indomalasian region).

Economic Importance: The bright orange corolla tubes of the flowers contain a colouring agent, nyctanthin. The corolla tubes were formerly used for dyeing silk, sometimes in conjunction with safflower, turmeric and indigo. The stem bark is used as tanning material and leaves are sometimes used for polishing wood and ivory. Dried plant is used as good fuel. Flower oil is used as perfume.

Traditional Uses: The flowers are collected for religious offerings and to make garlands. The orange corolla tubes of flowers are used for dyeing silk and cotton, a practice that started with Buddhist

monks, whose orange robes were given their colour by this flower. In Hindu mythology Parijata is regarded as one of the five wish-granting trees.

Medicinal Uses: Leaves have antibacterial, anthelmintic, anti-inflammatory, hepatoprotective, antipyretic, antioxidant and anti-fungal properties. Flowers are diuretic, anti-bilious, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, sedative and antilarial. Seeds are antibacterial, antifungal, immunomodulatory and antileishmanial. Stem is antipyretic, antioxidant and bark is anti-microbial.

Note: The plant can be propagated by seed germination or by grafting.

Source: **Tapas Kumar Paul**, Central National Herbarium, Botanical Survey of India, Howrah.