

ANDHRA PRADESH

State Tree: Vepa (Telugu).

Botanical Name: *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss.

Family: Meliaceae.

Common Names: Indian Lilac, Margosa, Neem (English); Limdo (Gujarati); Neem (Hindi); Bevu (Kannada); Kadu-Limba (Marathi); Arishta, Nimba, Picumarda (Odiya); Vempu (Tamil).



Etymology: The generic name is derived from the Persian word “azaddirakt”, which means “noble tree” and **indica** refers to the country in which it occurs.

Description: A large tree, to 20 m tall. Leaves pari- or imparipinnate, 10 – 45 cm long; rachis

up to 8 cm long, glabrous; leaflets up to 18, opposite, subopposite or alternate, ovate-lanceolate, lanceolate or falcate, prominently oblique at base, crenate-serrate along margins, acuminate at apex, 4 – 6 × 1 – 2 cm, glabrous. Inflorescence a panicle, axillary, as long as or shorter than the leaves. Flowers scented. Sepals 5, rounded, united at base. Petals 5, oblong-spathulate, c. 5 mm long, ciliate, pubescent inside, white. Staminal tube cylindrical, mouth expanded with 10 appendages; anthers 10, glabrous, inserted at the base of and opposite appendages, included. Ovary globose; style terete; stigma with a light-coloured rim at base. Fruit a drupe, oblong, yellow, 1-seeded; seeds ovoid, surrounded by a sweet pulp when ripe.

Flowering & Fruiting: February – September.



Flowering-twig

Range of Distribution: Throughout India; Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and also widely cultivated throughout the tropics.

Economic Importance: Wood is very hard and used for furniture-making and agricultural implements. Oil extracted from the seeds having strong disagreeable garlic-like odour and known as “margosa” oil, it heals bleeding gums and cures pyorrhoea and also used as insecticide and pesticide. Neem seed cake, a residue after extraction of the oil is valued as a fertilizer and repellent for insects.

Traditional Uses: The tree is considered sacred by Hindus. Twigs with leaves and flowers/fruits are used in religious and cultural ceremonies. Young twigs are used as tooth stick. The crushed leaves are taken orally to remove stomach worms. Leaf paste is applied on the body to cure chicken pox.

Medicinal Uses: This plant is extensively used in all kinds of traditional systems of medicines to treat many health-related problems and ailments. Almost every part of the plant is used. More than 400 active constituents have been derived from this plant. The plant is also known to exert anticancer, antioxidant, wound-healing, and antimicrobial properties. Neem oil and leaf extracts may be the wonder cure for psoriasis. It relieves the itching and pain while reducing the scale and redness of the patchy lesions.

L. Rasingam & D. Sathyanarayana

Botanical Survey of India, Deccan Regional Centre, Hyderabad.