**CHHATTISGARH**

**State Tree:** Sal, Sarai, Shakhu.

**Botanical Name:** **Shorea robusta** C.F. Gaertn.

**Family:** Dipterocarpaceae.

**Common Names:** Borsal, Hal, Sal (Assamese); Sal (English); Sal, Sakhu, Shal (Bengali, Hindi); Ral, Rala (Gujarathi, Marathi); Kabba (Kannada); Malappamarutu, Maramaram (Malayalam); Soringhi (Odiya); Shal (Sanskrit); Kungiliyam (Tamil); Gugal, Guggilamu (Telugu).

**Etymology:** **Shorea** is named after Sir John Shore (1751 – 1834), the Governor-General of the British East India Company during 1793 – 1798; **robusta** in Latin means robust, strong or hard.

**Description:** Deciduous or semi-deciduous tree, up to 40 m tall; bark longitudinally furrowed; branchlets pubescent. Leaves ovate-oblong, 7 – 20 × 4 – 12 cm, cordate or rounded at base, entire at margins, short-acuminate at apex, leathery, glabrous, shining; petioles 2 – 2.5 cm long; stipules falcate, 7 – 8 mm long. Flowers in axillary panicles, subsessile, fragrant. Sepals 5, ovate-triangular, ca 2 mm long, yellowish pubescent. Petals oblong-lanceolate, 1 – 1.5 cm long, yellow or cream-coloured. Stamens many, shorter than petals. Ovary pubescent, 3-loculed. Samara covered by 5 spathulate wings; seeds ovoid, 8 – 10 mm long.
**Flowering & Fruiting:** March – July.

**Distribution:** It is native to the Indian subcontinent, to south of the Himalaya, from Myanmar in the east to Nepal, India and Bangladesh. In India, it is distributed mainly in sub–Himalayan tract forming signature Shiwalik Sal forests from Kangra in Himachal Pradesh to Arunachal Pradesh through Garhwal–Kumaon region of Uttarakhand, Nepal, West Bengal and Sikkim. In northeast region it is extended southward to Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura and to the south of the Himalaya it covers broad range from Terai to the Eastern Ghats through Vindhya and Satpura Ranges covering parts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

**Economic Importance:** Wood has high timber value. The bark is used for tanning. Tree yields an oleoresin called ‘Sal Dammar’ used as incense and also employed in paints and varnishes, and for caulking boats. It has been employed for hardening softer waxes for use in shoe–polishes, and for carbon papers and ribbons. Tribals occasionally use leaves for wrapping tobacco and making plates and cups. Twigs are used as tooth–stick. Seeds are eaten after roasting. Oil is extracted from seeds that are used for cooking and burning.

**Traditional Uses:** This tree has special significance in the festivals and marriages of tribals. It is believed that unless the bridegroom sits on the altar made of tree of sal, the marriage has no meaning.

**Medicinal Uses:** The resin is used in the indigenous system of medicine as an astringent and is given in diarrhoea and dysentery. It is also used in skin diseases, ear troubles and as foot care cream. Fruits are used in treatment of excessive salivation, epilepsy, and cholera and powdered seeds are used to treat dental problems. It cleanses the skin of oily secretion and is used as the cleanser for washing hair.
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