

PUNJAB

State Tree: Shishai, Shisham, Tali (Hindi).

Botanical Name: *Dalbergia sissoo* Roxb.

Etymology: The generic name, '**Dalbergia**' honours the Swedish Botanist, Nicholas Dalberg and his brother Carl Gustav Dalberg, and specific epithet, **sissoo** is the Bengali vernacular name for this species.

Family: Leguminosae: Papilionoideae.

Common Names: Bombay Blackwood, Indian Rosewood, Red Wood (English); Sisam, Sissai, Sissu (Hindi); Aguru, Dhira, Kapila, Shinshapa (Sanskrit).



Description: A large semi-deciduous tree, up to 25 m tall; trunk greyish yellow with longitudinal cracks. Leaves alternate, imparipinnate; leaflets 3 - 5, alternate, broadly elliptic, ovate to orbicular, cuneate at base, entire at margins, abruptly acuminate apex, 3.5 - 6.5 × 3 - 6 cm, leathery, puberulous when young, soon glabrescent. Flowers in axillary panicles with caducous, pubescent bracts. Calyx shortly toothed, hairy. Corolla white or slightly yellowish; vexillum obovate, long-clawed. Stamens 9, monadelphous with uniform anthers. Ovary pubescent, 2 - 4-ovuled. Pods

strap-shaped, glabrous, pale brown, narrowed in to a stalk, 1 - 4-seeded.

Flowering & Fruiting: March – May.

Range of Distribution: It is native to the Indian subcontinent and southern Iran. It is also widely distributed in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Persia, Iraq, Kenya and Tanzania.

Economic Importance: Sissoo wood is commonly used for furniture and cabinet-making due to its great strength, durability and elasticity. It is highly valued as constructional and general utility timber and is used for making railway sleeper, musical instruments, electric casing, boats, wheels and laminated skis. It is considered as excellent fuel and is eminently suitable for making charcoal. Leaves are used as fodder.

Traditional Uses: Various parts of the Sissoo plant are traditionally used in the treatment of different diseases. Sissoo oil, extracted from seeds is used to treat blue-itching and scabies. Finely ground leaf paste, mixed with palm candy is used in curing different female diseases. A mixture of sissoo nectar, water and milk magically cure any type of fevers.

Medicinal Uses: In Ayurveda, wood and bark are used as abortifacient, anthelmintic, antipyretic, aphrodisiac, expectorant and refrigerant. They are effectively used for anal disorders, blood diseases, burning sensations, dysentery, dyspepsia, leucoderma and skin ailments. Leaf juice is used for eye ailments. In Yunani system, the wood is used for blood disorders, eye and nose disorders, scabies, scalding urine, stomach problems, syphilis etc. In India, wood is also used for curing boils, eruptions, leprosy and nausea.

Note: The plant can be propagated by root suckers and also by seeds. Sisu plant is often planted on roadsides as avenue tree. It is also a good shade tree for tea plantation.

Manas Ranjan Debta, Debasmitra Dutta – Pramanick & S.K. Srivastava

Northern Regional Centre, Botanical Survey of India, Dehra Dun.