

## TRIPURA

**State Flower:** Cobra Safriron

**Botanical Name:** *Mesua ferrea* L.

**Family:** Clusiaceae.

**Vernacular Names:** Nahor (Assamese); Ceylon Ironwood, Indian Rose Chestnut (English); Nag Champa, Nagkesar (Hindi); Dieng-ngai (Khasi); Herse (Lushai); Vainavu (Malayalam); Nageshor, Uthau (Manipuri); Thorlachampa (Marathi); Ngai-ching (Naga); Tadinangu (Tamil); Narmishka (Urdu).

**Etymology:** Specific epithet is derived from Latin word '*ferrea*' means iron, attributed to its heavy hardwood.



**Description:** An evergreen, middle-sized handsome tree with a dense conical crown; bark smooth and grey but generally warty in young trees. Leaves opposite-decussate, lanceolate or narrowly elliptic-oblong, rounded at base, entire at margins, bluntly long-acuminate, 6.5 – 18 × 1.5 – 5 cm, purple-brown when young. Flowers solitary, terminal, 3.8 – 7.5 cm across, very fragrant. Sepals 4, suborbicular, 1.2 – 1.5 cm long, imbricate, persistent. Petals 4, obovate or obcordate, pure white, very finely brown or purple-veined. Stamens very many; filaments very slender; anthers linear, 2.5 – 5 mm long, golden yellow. Ovary ovoid; style long; stigma peltate. Fruits a capsule, ovoid, pointed, 3 – 4 cm across, 1 – 4-seeded; seeds oily pale-yellow; cotyledons fleshy.

**Flowering & Fruiting:** April – May and August – October.

**Range of Distribution:** India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

**Economic Importance:** It is used in making railway sleepers, bridges, posts, beam poles, musical instruments, gun-stock, and in the boat building, construction work. The oleoresin obtained from the tree may be used for varnish. The seeds contain fatty oil which has

been found excellent for soap-making. Strung with thin strip of bamboo they are often used as candles which burn steadily with reddish light but give a heavy smoke. Fruits are edible.

**Traditional Knowledge:** The wood is used for making large a wooden pestle for pounding rice and the dark-red wood is used for house posts and tool-handles.

**Medicinal Uses:** The stamens yield the drug Nagakesar. Seeds and heartwood have anti-inflammatory properties. Volatile oil from the flowers showed antibacterial activities and it is used to cure cough and indigestion. The oil from the seeds shows antifungal activity against a number of pathogenic fungi and is used as cure for skin ailments.

**Note:** This arboreal species is common and generally gregarious in almost all evergreen forests, where the ground is more or less hilly. It thrives best in a locality with heavy rainfall and humid atmosphere, much cultivated in gardens and avenues. The plant acts as sink for dust pollutants. It can be identified by its conspicuous, fragrant, white flowers with golden yellow anthers.

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