

Ficus benghalensis

Common name: Banyan Tree

Family: Moraceae

Habit: Tree

Location: Hostel and Bus Parking Area

Distribution: *Ficus benghalensis* is native to tropical Asia, from India towards Myanmar, Thailand, southern China and Malaysia. It has been cultivated and became naturalized in many other tropical regions including western Africa, North America, West Indies, Australia, the Middle East, and many islands in the Pacific (Rojo et al., 1999; US Forest Service, 2014).

Description:

Ficus benghalensis is an evergreen, monoecious, fast-growing tree found mainly in monsoon and rainforests, that can reach a height of up to 30 meters. It is resistant to drought and mild frost. It produces propagating roots which grow downwards as aerial roots on the branches that grow downward like lianas. Once these roots reach the ground, they take root and become woody trunks and supportive. What we think of as the fruit is really a hollow, flower-bearing structure called a syconium. The inside it is lined with hundreds of male and female flowers. The males carry pollen and the females bear seeds. The figs produced by the tree are eaten by birds such as the Indian myna. Fig seeds that pass through the digestive system of birds are more likely to germinate and sprout earlier. The fruit is a globose to depressed-globose fig, 1.5-2.5 cm in diameter and pinkish red in color.

Uses:

Banyan is an important tree in the Indian subcontinent. Banyan is the national tree of India due to its iconic aspect, longevity and cultural importance in Indian villages: the banyan tree is the focal point of village life and the village council meets under the shade of this tree (Know India, 2020). It was named banyan because it was appreciated for its shade by merchants and travelers from the Bania caste in India. The tree is planted as a shade tree and an ornamental along roads and in parks. All parts of the tree – fruits, leaves, roots and bark – are used in ethnomedicine. The fruits are edible but only eaten in times of scarcity. Banyan leaves are lopped for ruminants, particularly in lean periods (Rojas-Sandoval, 2015; Rojo et al., 1999; Nazki et al., 2018).





Image showing red colored fig



Image showing the oldest Banyan Tree of Hostel