

Cannonball Tree

Description

Common name: Cannonball tree, Nagalingam, Naga Pushpam, Kailashpati

Scientific name: *Couroupita guianensis*



The Cannonball tree is a tall, deciduous tree indigenous to South America. It has fragrant flowers that are pinkish, crimson, and yellowish, and have white filaments and yellow anthers. The tree is commonly known as the cannonball tree because of the shape of its brown, woody fruits that resemble cannon balls. The fruits contain a white pulp and many seeds. The flowers and fruit grow on the trunk of the tree. The leaves are shed thrice every year. Moreover, in a polluted environment, the tree will shed its leaves.

Uses

The fruit's hard covering is used to make utensils and containers, while the fruit's pulp is used to make a medicinal drink by the locals. Although the fruit is edible, it gives off an unpleasant smell when ripe which is off-putting for most people. The tree is also grown ornamentally because of its vibrant and unique flowers.

Research shows that the tree possesses antinociceptive, antimicrobial, antifungal and wound healing properties. The Cannonball tree is used in traditional medicine for skin diseases, malaria, wound healing, stomach aches, hypertension etc.

Significance



The tree holds religious significance for Hindus, as it is believed that the flower resembles the Naga's hood protecting the Shivalinga. This explains why the tree is sometimes called Nagalingam or Naga Pushpam. The tree is also grown at Buddhist temples.

The cannonball flower is the state flower of Puducherry.