

Wild Almond and Indian Almond

Though they have similar common names, these two species are very different! Read on to learn about them.

Common Name: Wild Almond

Scientific Name: *Sterculia foetida*



The scientific name of this tall, pretty tree is because the flowers supposedly smell like dung. This tree is very easy to confuse with the Red Silk Cotton – but can be distinguished by its fleshy pink-green flowers and brown, woody, boat-shaped fruit. The leaves are palmate and have between five and nine leaflets.

The seeds inside the fruit are often compared to almonds – and hence the misleading name. When eaten in large quantities without roasting, the seed can cause diarrhea. The sweetish pulp of the fruit is also edible.

This is a native tree of coastal India and is visible across Mumbai.

Common Name: Indian Almond/ Sea Almond

Scientific Name: *Terminalia catappa*



A deciduous tree that reaches up to about 20 meters high, the Indian Almond is a handsome tree that has spread across continents and is used for landscaping projects from Brazil to Mumbai. It has horizontal branches that give it the appearance of growing in layers. It is easy to spot because its mature leaves turn deep red – providing a pop of colour to the drabest street – and it has a pagoda-like shape.

The leaves are large and have an obovate shape. They are shed in November and December. The small, star-shaped flowers grow in summer and the fruit is oval and turns purplish when ripe. The seed of the fruit is shaped like an almond, and hence the name Indian Almond.

The seeds are dispersed by sea water over considerable distances. The leaves of the tree and bark are used to treat rheumatic joints, dysentery and thrush.