

# Rain Tree

Common name: Rain Tree

Scientific name: *Samanea saman*

The glorious Rain Trees benignly supply shade to a host of sandwich makers, chaiwallas, and keychain sellers on the pavements of Mumbai.



An evergreen tree native to tropical America, the rain tree has an umbrella shaped canopy. The flower heads are pinkish white and resemble powder puffs. The fruit are black-brown turgid pods which contain an edible, sticky pulp. The leaflets are diamond shaped and feathery. The bark is grey-brown to black.

It might be called a rain tree because the leaf folds at night and on cloudy days, which lets the rain fall through the tree's canopy. Alternatively, it might be called a rain tree due to the excretions of cicadas that feed on the tree, which fall like fine rain.

The Rain Tree was introduced to India by the British as a source of railway fuel.

The rain tree is often grown as an avenue tree. The leaves and pods are used to feed livestock. The pulp can be eaten by humans and made into a beverage. The rain tree is also grown for timber as the wood resists termites and decay and is durable. The wood is used for craftwork and to make wheels. The tree can also be used as a pasture tree as it supplies lots of shade and enhances grass growth underneath its canopy, possibly through Nitrogen fixation.



The tree can live from 80-100 years.

Various parts of the tree are also used in traditional medicine for sore throats, constipation, diarrhea, etc. Research suggests that it shows antiulcer, antioxidant, antibacterial, insecticidal properties.