

# CALENDAR 2025

From the innocuous marigold to the conch shell, from the deep sea to the bees, the birds and their complex abodes, to the intricacies of the human body, to the incredible geometry of the solar system, all things big and small in this universe reveal superlative design.

Injecting rhythm, balance and harmony displayed in nature into the human environment remains a vital quest and one of the challenges of this millennium.

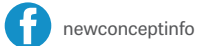
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# CALENDAR 2025



## Celebrating India's Living Heritage: A Tribute to Native Trees

Trees are more than just silent witnesses to the passage of time; they are the lifelines of our planet. They cradle ecosystems, inspire cultures, and enrich human lives. From sheltering fauna to bearing fruits that have become symbols of abundance, trees connect us to nature, history, and one another. This year's calendar is a celebration of India's native trees—the unsung heroes of our landscapes, whose roots run deep in our soil and traditions.

Through these pages, we invite you on a journey into the heart of India's natural heritage. Discover the sacred groves that guard biodiversity, the ancient Mango trees that sweeten our summers, and the resilient Khair tree whose heartwood flavours *paan*. Marvel at the Palash's fiery blooms, the Rhododendrons of the Sholas, and the hidden artistry of *Kampani Kalam*, where native flora found immortality on canvas. Learn how these trees, with their rich medicinal properties and remarkable environmental adaptations, have sustained life and culture for generations.

But this calendar is more than an ode—it is a call to action. Many of these trees are endangered, their habitats shrinking under the weight of modern development pressures. As you turn each page, let their stories remind you of the intricate web of life they sustain and the urgent need to protect them.

Let us honour these silent giants, guardians of India's past, present, and future. May their beauty and resilience inspire you to nurture the green legacy they represent. The journey begins—turn the page and let the trees speak.

*For more information on the calendar leaves, please click on*  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qtq9wAUUiYrWxcH8GqvnW3kG7vFAcgMiYpEzcGN-PjE/edit?tab=t.0>

## Company School Paintings

### *Kampani Kalam*

When British and European colonists arrived in India, their interest went beyond exploiting its mineral wealth—they delved into its natural treasures. The flora and fauna of the subcontinent offered not only potential medicines and products but also subjects for study and classification. As part of their botanical pursuits, some colonial officials turned to skilled Indian artists, commissioning them to create detailed illustrations of native plants and animals.

These local artists, already masters of traditional art forms, adapted to the exacting discipline of botanical illustration. With new tools and techniques, they captured plants at perfect scale, illustrating every detail from root to petal with remarkable precision. Painted in watercolours, these delicate works combined scientific rigour with artistic grace, creating a genre now known as Company School or *Kampani Kalam*.

The resulting masterpieces—cataloguing India's natural wealth—became prized possessions of affluent European collectors, many of whom took these treasures back to museums or private estates. Sadly, the artists themselves largely faded into obscurity. While art historians have uncovered names like Vishnu Persaud, Gorachand, Lutchman Singh, Rungiah, Govindoo, Haludar, Bhawani Das, Ram Das, and Sheikh Zain al-Din, their personal stories remain elusive.

These illustrations are more than just scientific records; they are testaments to a cross-cultural collaboration where traditional artistry met colonial curiosity. Though much of this art now resides in Western museums, it remains a vivid reminder of India's extraordinary biodiversity and the artists who painted its soul into history.







*Hiptage benghalensis*



In colonial India, artistry and botany came together in an unexpected alliance. Local artists, blending traditional techniques with scientific precision, created exquisite illustrations of native plants and animals. Known as the Company School or *Kampani Kalam*, their works immortalised India's natural beauty—proving that even imperial snobbery was not impervious to native creativity.

## January 2025

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## Mahua

*Madhuca longifolia*

Imagine a tree that throws a party every spring, inviting everyone from buzzing bees to mammoth beasts. That's the Mahua tree for you—a botanical *bon vivant* of India's forests. Its pale yellow flowers, exuding a fragrance sweeter than a dessert shop, are not just a treat for the senses but also the main ingredient in a traditional liquor so enticing that even wild elephants have been known to get tipsy on it.

But Mahua isn't just about fun and games. Tribal communities across Central India revere it as the "Tree of Life," relying on its bounty for food, medicine, and rituals. In Tamil Nadu, Mahua trees grace temple courtyards, and legend has it that the esteemed Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar was born beneath one in Mylapore's Ekambareshwarar Temple.

Beyond its cultural charisma, Mahua is an ecological workhorse. Its dense canopy offers shade and prevents soil erosion, while its flowers support pollinators. The seeds produce oil which is a skincare saviour, a soap-maker's delight, and even a biofuel contender. And let's not forget the seed cakes, which double as organic fertilizer—talk about zero waste!

So, next time you encounter a Mahua tree, tip your hat to this unsung hero of the forest. Better yet, plant one. You'll be adding a touch of sweetness, a dash of tradition, and a whole lot of ecological goodness to the world.





## February 2025

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Meet the Mahua tree, nature's multitasker. From its sweet-scented flowers that tempt both humans and elephants, to seeds that moonlight as skincare ingredients, Mahua is the gift that keeps on giving.



## Rhododendrons of the Sholas

### *Rhododendron arboreum nilagiricum*

The Southern Western Ghats, a majestic mountain range in peninsular India, are home to the unique Shola forests—an enchanting blend of slow-growing evergreen trees and montane grasslands. These high-altitude meadows, thriving in cool climates, complement the dense forests and sustain montane species—rare plants and animals uniquely adapted to these elevations. Together, they form a fragile yet extraordinary ecosystem.

The Shola forests are living fossils, remnants of a bygone ice age. Among their rarest inhabitants is the Rhododendron, endemic to South India. Alongside the endangered Nilgiri Tahr and other unique species, these ancient trees tell a story of survival, having retreated to the cool, moist habitats of the Western Ghats as the ice age ended. The Rhododendron's closest relatives, astonishingly, now thrive in the distant Himalayas—a testament to the dramatic shifts in climate and geography over millennia.

But these ecosystems are vanishing, threatened by deforestation and climate change. Slow to regenerate and highly sensitive to environmental shifts, the Shola forests are disappearing along with their remarkable biodiversity.

The Rhododendrons of the Sholas, with their ancient roots and ecological significance, remind us of nature's delicate balance. Protecting these forests means preserving a vital link to Earth's prehistoric past and ensuring the survival of species found nowhere else.

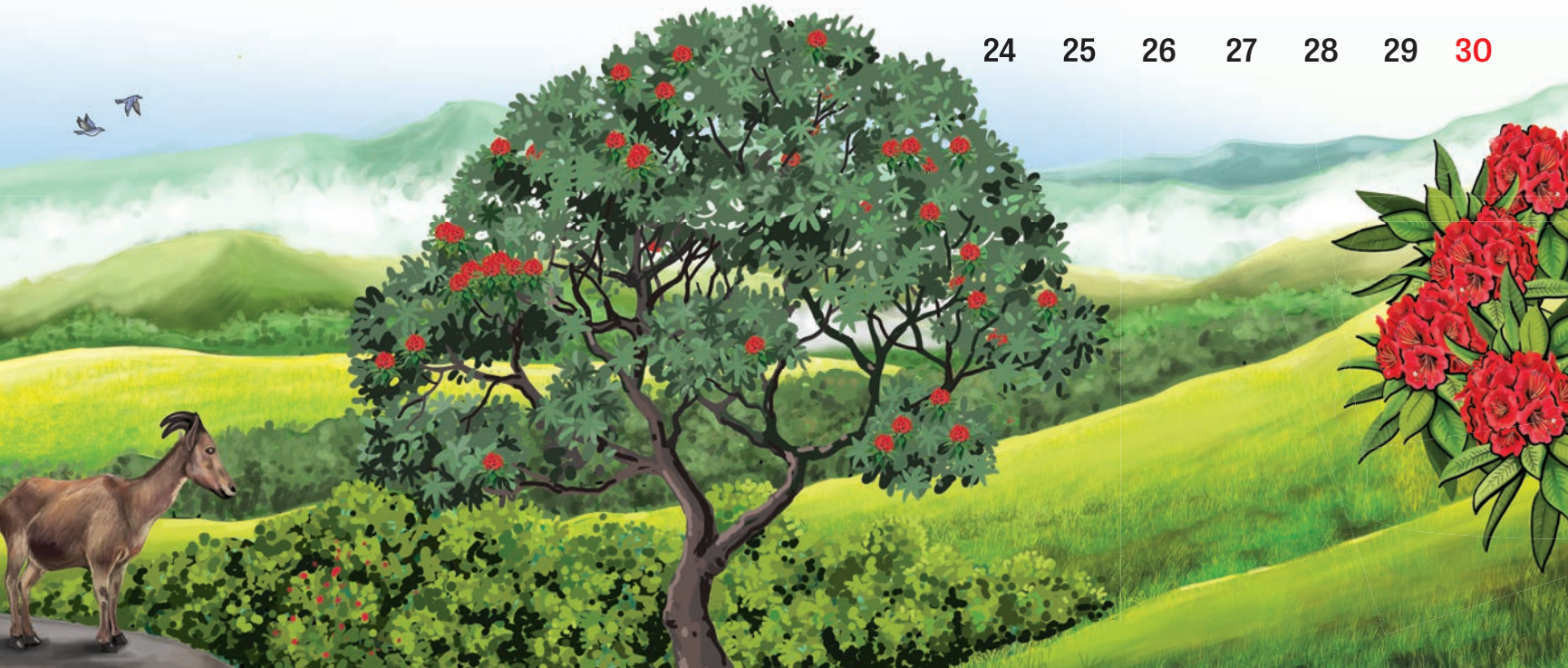




Tucked away in the misty Shola forests of the Western Ghats, the Rhododendron is like nature's time traveller from the ice age, standing tall among ancient companions like the Nilgiri Tahr. These forests are Earth's treasure chests, brimming with prehistoric wonders—but without protection, they risk becoming a forgotten chapter in history.

## March 2025

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## The Flame of the Forest – Palash

*Butea monosperma*



In the early days of summer, the bare, deciduous forests of India are set ablaze—not by fire, but by the vibrant blooms of the Palash tree, aptly named the Flame of the Forest. Its striking vermilion flowers attract insects, birds, and small mammals eager for its nectar, turning these forests into hubs of activity and colour.

But the Palash is much more than its blossoms. It provides timber, resin, fodder, medicine, and dye. Plates made from its leaves once served meals across Indian households. The tree supports the Indian Lac Insect, which produces shellac, while its dried bark (Bengal kino) is prized by druggists and leather workers. The gum, known as *kamarkas*, is used in traditional dishes, and its flowers add a splash of flavour and colour to sherbets and teas.

In Sanskrit literature, the Palash flower symbolises spring and passion. Yet, the Palash is more than a symbol of romance—it also represents resilience, thriving in barren landscapes and enduring harsh climates, much like the spirit it has come to embody in Indian history.

The tree, with its fiery blossoms, lent its name to the village of Palashi, once abundant with these Flame of the Forest trees. It was here, in June 1757, that the Battle of Plassey unfolded, marking a British victory over the Nawab of Bengal and the beginning of their rule in India. However, much like the tree itself, the spirit of resistance proved unyielding. The defiance shown in defeat became the spark that ignited a flame of resistance, fuelling India's fight for independence over the next two centuries against the colonial oppressors.

The Palash, with its flaming blooms and rich legacy, reminds us of nature's beauty, cultural depth, and the enduring stories etched in its shade.





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As summer begins, the bare forests of India come alive with the fiery blooms of the Palash tree or Flame of the Forest. Its vibrant flowers draw creatures in search of nectar, while its beauty, utility, and deep ties to Indian history captivate human hearts. Discover the many stories this tree has to tell.



## Gular or Cluster Fig

*Ficus racemosa*

The Gular, or Cluster Fig, is no ordinary tree—it's a quiet guardian of life with a fascinating secret. Belonging to a vast fig family of over 750 species—500 of which thrive in the Asian-Australian region and 10 unique to India—the Gular holds a special place in Indian ecosystems and culture. Revered alongside the Banyan, this remarkable tree produces fruit twice a year in a unique process called cauliflory, where figs sprout directly from its trunk as if nature is preening herself. But the real magic lies inside: these “fruits” are in fact flowers hidden within a syconium, a tiny world where intricate natural processes unfold.

Fig wasps take centre stage here, working tirelessly to pollinate the flowers while laying their eggs. But it's not all smooth sailing—gall wasps and parasitoid wasps enter the scene, disrupting the harmony by competing for space and resources. Adding to the mix, nematodes hitch a ride with pollinating wasps, creating a microscopic contest for survival. This seemingly chaotic interplay ensures the tree's seeds develop, keeping the cycle of life going.

Outside its hidden drama, the Gular is a steadfast provider. Its figs sustain humans, monkeys, birds, and bats, especially during food-scarce times. It offers shade, prevents soil erosion, and fosters biodiversity.

Don't miss the opportunity, when you encounter a Gular tree, to pause and admire its serene exterior. Beneath its calm lies a world of complexity and purpose, quietly contributing to life around it. Planting one means supporting a tree that thrives through cooperation and competition.





The sacred Gular tree, or Cluster Fig, wears its fruits like ornaments on its trunk—a unique feast for humans and animals during tough times. But look closer, and you'll find a drama unfolding inside: tiny wasps and nematodes battling it out in nature's smallest arena, all for pollination and survival.

## May 2025

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## The Kair or Ker – Caperberry

*Capparis decidua*

In the harsh sands of Rajasthan's Thar Desert, the Kair or Ker is the scrappy survivor no one expected to make it. With its vine-like branches and scruffy appearance, it might look like just another desert shrub—but don't let its modest looks fool you. The Kair is a master of resilience, perfectly adapted to extreme conditions.

Twice a year, in March and September, this unassuming tree bursts into life with small, pink flowers that turn into pinkish berries—tiny desert jewels providing vital sustenance for creatures during the dry spell. These berries not only feed the desert dwellers but also help spread seeds, ensuring life carries on till the arrival of the monsoon. Its spiky, water-conserving leaves and deep taproot let it go without rain for up to 3-4 years—now that's some serious endurance.

But the Kair isn't just a tough survivor; it's a local hero. People and shepherds rely on it for shelter from desert storms, while its medicinal properties are used to treat everything from digestive issues to scorpion stings.

And, of course, it's a key ingredient in Rajasthani cuisine, starring in tangy dishes like Ker-Sangri, where its fruits join forces with the Sangri bean. With a history stretching back over three millennia in Indian folklore, the Kair isn't just a tree—it's a true desert icon, blending endurance, adaptability, and a touch of magic.

So, let's raise a toast to this scraggly tree which isn't just surviving—it's showing the desert who's the champ.



The Kair or Ker is a desert warrior, thriving in the Thar's blistering heat. With its tough branches and vibrant berries, it provides sustenance, medicine, and even a tasty pickle. A true marvel, the Kair is a lifeline for both people and wildlife in one of the harshest places on Earth.

## June 2025

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## Peepal and Neem

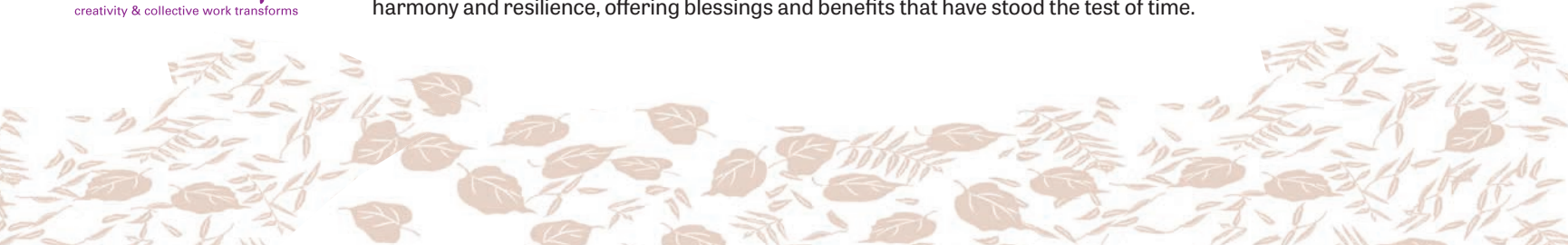
*Ficus religiosa and Azadirachta indica*

The Peepal, also known as the sacred fig, is a revered deciduous tree with a fascinating life cycle. Starting as a hemi-epiphyte, it often begins its journey as a “freeloader,” clinging to another tree before growing into a majestic standalone giant. Alongside it, the Neem tree, famous for its medicinal properties, is a hardy evergreen that seems like nature’s pharmacist, earning its place in Ayurveda, homoeopathy, and traditional healing systems. Together, these two trees form a duo celebrated for their cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance.

Their partnership is as much nature’s doing as it is human tradition. Birds play cupid by dispersing Neem seeds near Peepal trees or wiping sticky Peepal seeds onto Neem branches. The Peepal, with its “strangler” personality, then takes root on the Neem, creating a symbiotic yet competitive relationship.

In many parts of India, this pairing is formalised through the ritual of “tree marriage.” During weddings, a ‘male’ Peepal and ‘female’ Neem tree are planted side by side and tied with a sacred yellow thread (*thaali*) as a symbolic blessing for the couple’s union. This ancient practice is more than just tradition—it may also represent a form of ritualistic intercropping, ensuring ecological balance.

Similar pairings appear in Indian customs, such as the Peepal with Banyan or Mango with Jasmine. Whether in culture, nature, or rituals, the Peepal and Neem exemplify harmony and resilience, offering blessings and benefits that have stood the test of time.







## July 2025

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The Peepal and Neem trees, sacred pillars of Indian culture, are like the ultimate power couple of nature—one spiritual and serene, the other tough and healing. Whether united by matchmaking birds or tied together in wedding rituals, this dynamic duo offers blessings, remedies, and ecological harmony with the flair of a timeless partnership.



## Kamala or Kumkum Tree

*Mallotus philippensis*

The Kamala or Kumkum tree is the multitasking genius of India's forests. Standing 10–12 metres tall, it graces evergreen, moist, and dry deciduous landscapes across India and Asia. A botanical artist, it produces a vibrant red dye from the powdery coating on its fruits—a dye so exquisite it has been cherished for centuries as sindoor or kumkum and to colour silk and wool in golden-red hues. Truly, this tree knows how to make an impression.

But the Kamala isn't all flair and no function. It moonlights as a natural healer, earning its place in Ayurveda for treating ailments ranging from skin infections to jaundice and malaria. Think of it as a green pharmacy, dishing out remedies while serving up its bright red fruits to hungry birds. Amazingly its leaves even double up as nurseries for butterfly larvae, including the Tricolour Pied Flat and Chestnut-streaked Sailer, making it a hub of biodiversity. It's so busy hosting wildlife that you'd think it was running an all-inclusive forest resort.

Unfortunately, this quiet hero is facing threats from deforestation and invasive species, shrinking its presence in the wild.

The Kamala tree is a vibrant spoke in the intricate wheel of life—artist, healer, and provider. Protecting it is a promise to the future: a world that remains colourful, balanced, and full of life. Let's be grateful for its bounty and ensure that it thrives.



Meet the Kamala or Kumkum tree, nature's very own artisan and apothecary. With its rich red dye, famously used as sindoor or kumkum, the tree paints culture with colour. Meanwhile, its medicinal gifts and wildlife-friendly fruits keep life buzzing around its butterfly-hosting branches. Like a quiet superstar, the Kamala is vital yet increasingly rare—let's ensure it moves to the spotlight.



## August 2025

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## Sacred Groves – last strongholds of endemic, native trees

Across India, it's rare to find a shrine without a sacred tree or grove nearby. Sacred groves, the untouched patches of virgin forest, represent the bond between communities and the divine, serving as living symbols of harmony with nature.

In Meghalaya alone, over 133 sacred groves, including the renowned Mawphlang Sacred Forest, continue this tradition. These groves are said to be the dwelling places of deities like 'U Basa,' where rituals are performed to honour and protect them. Such is the reverence for these sites that not even a stick or stone is taken from their grounds.

These groves are more than spiritual sanctuaries; they are ecological treasure troves. Near Shillong Peak, the critically endangered *Ilex khasiana*, a long-leaved holly tree bearing bright red fruits, finds refuge within a sacred grove. Known for its medicinal and antimicrobial properties, this rare tree is one of many endemic species sheltered here. Some plants are so unique that they are known only by their local names, their secrets preserved by the groves.

Yet, these sacred spaces are under siege. Human encroachment, invasive species, poaching, and a shift away from traditional beliefs threaten their survival.

Sacred groves are not just remnants of the past—they are guardians of India's natural and cultural heritage. Protecting them means safeguarding some of the last strongholds of endemic biodiversity and honouring a centuries-old tradition of coexistence with nature.






## September 2025

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Sacred groves, India's living temples, are sanctuaries where nature and spirituality intertwine. In Meghalaya, over 133 such groves, including the famed Mawphlang Sacred Forest, shelter critically endangered treasures. Yet, as traditions waver and modern pressures mount, these ancient havens stand at the crossroads, their future hanging in the balance.



## Khair tree

### *Senegalia catechu*

The Khair tree, a hardy, thorny species, thrives across South and Southeast Asia, from India and Myanmar to Cambodia and China's Yunnan province. Its Malay name, *Kachu*, inspired the Latin *catechu*, reflecting the tree's reputation for producing the extract cutch, or catechu, prized for its versatility.

In India, the concentrated heartwood extract *katha* is a culinary favourite, adding its signature flavour to *paan* (betel leaf chewed after meals) while aiding digestion. Beyond *paan*, the Khair tree's offerings extend into traditional medicine. Crystals from its wood cavities, along with its bark and leaves, are used to treat ulcers, sore throat, skin ailments, and diarrhoea. Boiling its wood and foliage produces *cutch*, a dark, sticky substance used to tan leather, dye fabrics, and even preserve fish nets and water-exposed ropes. It also finds industrial applications as a viscosity modifier in crude oil wells.

The Khair tree's gifts don't end there. Its termite-resistant wood is highly valued for construction, while its leaves provide abundant fodder. Flowering mostly in the wet season, it draws bees with its nectar, but mature trees often bloom year-round, ensuring a steady contribution to the ecosystem.

With its blend of utility, tradition, and ecological value, the Khair tree stands as a thorny but indispensable guardian of South Asia's natural and cultural heritage.





## October 2025

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The Khair tree may look unassuming with its thorny branches, but it's packed with surprises. Whether adding zing to India's iconic *paan*, aiding traditional medicine, or helping preserve fishing nets, this tree proves that even the prickliest personalities can have a sweet side.





## Mango

*Mangifera indica*

The Mango is India's golden monarch, earning its title as the 'King of Fruits' with good reason. First cultivated over 5,000 years ago, it likely hails from Northeast India or the Indo-Burma region. Today, India boasts the world's largest mango collection, with 1,500 varieties, and supplies 50 per cent of the global mango bounty. The Portuguese, who stumbled upon this tropical treasure in Kerala, adapted its Malayalam name, *Māānga*, into the globally beloved 'Mango,' which soon whetted European palates and graced royal tables. From backyard feasts to fine dining, the Mango has become a world favourite.

More than just a fruit, the Mango is a cultural icon, deeply rooted in Indian rituals and traditions. Its fruits, flowers, and leaves are central to celebrations, earning Sanskrit names like *Rasāla* (sap-filled), *Sahakāra* (companion of Kāmā, the God of Love), and *Madhu-dūta* (messenger of spring). The Mango's blossoms have inspired Sanskrit poetry, including Kalidāsa's *Shākuntalam*, while the kairi (raw mango) motif—better known as paisley in the West—has flourished in art, fabrics, and rangolis.

In Ayurveda, the Mango is both a healer and a delight. Its ripe fruit revitalises the body. Every part of the tree, from bark to leaves, has therapeutic uses, making it a natural pharmacy wrapped in irresistible flavour.

With its royal legacy, cultural significance, and universal appeal, the Mango remains a timeless symbol of India's richness, vitality, and enduring sweetness. And honestly, could any fruit be more deserving of the crown?





## November 2025

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The Mango, crowned the 'King of Fruits,' is more than a treat for the taste buds—it's a legend of Indian culture. For over 5,000 years, the tree's golden fruit, fragrant blossoms, and verdant leaves have graced rituals, inspired poetry, and symbolised abundance. Heralding spring with its bounty, the Mango is India's sweetest ambassador to the world.







## The land of missing native trees

Trees are nature's quiet custodians, providing essential services like oxygen, carbon storage, water retention, and habitat for countless species. They prevent erosion, filter pollutants, and support ecosystems in ways that often go unnoticed. Yet, humanity's awareness of their importance remains woefully inadequate.

According to a 2021 report by the Botanic Gardens Conservation International, a third of tree species in the Indo-Malaya region remain unevaluated, leaving potential losses of our natural heritage in the shadows. Globally, out of 58,497 tree species, 142 are already extinct, and 17,510 are threatened. In India, home to around 650 endemic tree species, 469 are threatened.

The *Hopea shingkeng*, once thriving in the eastern Himalayas, has likely disappeared due to overexploitation. Similarly, Tamil Nadu's *Vachellia bolei* may have been lost to sand dune destruction. Even ancient species like India's tree ferns, whose ancestors predate the dinosaurs, are critically threatened by trade. The Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*), Assam Catkin Yew (*Amentotaxus assamica*), and countless others face an uncertain future.

As forests fall to highways, housing projects, and dams, it's not just trees that vanish—entire ecosystems crumble. If these silent sentinels could speak, they might ask: how many more must we lose before we act? The time to document, protect, and propagate our native trees is now; before these guardians of life become mere memories.





## December 2025

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Trees, nature's silent sentinels, sustain life on Earth, offering oxygen, food, and shelter, while silently battling extinction. Of India's 2,603 tree species, 469 face this grim fate, with some, like *Hopea shingkeng* and *Vachellia bolei*, already lost. How many more will vanish before we take notice?



# 2026

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