Ficus religiosa L.

Systematic Position

Kingdom: Plantae

Phylum: Tracheophyta

Class : Magnoliopsida

Order: Rosales

Family: Moraceae

Genus : *Ficus*

Species: *Ficus religiosa* L.

Popular names: Peepal, Pipal, Bo-tree, Sacred fig, Peepri, Bodhi tree, Ashathwa, Pimpal, Arasu.

Nature: Tree

Flowering time: January to March

Fruiting time: March to April

Plant distribution: The peepal tree is native to South China, Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan and Sub-Himalayan tract. It is also found growing wild in moist forests of central India. It is cultivated throughout India and also found emerging from crevices in the moist walls of old buildings.

Gardening notes:

1. It requires well drained, fertile soil and direct sun light.

2. It grows well in dry and hot conditions.

3. Over watering is to be avoided.

4. Propagation: By softwood cuttings and seeds.

Economic importance:

1. Bark fibre is used for making paper.

2. Bark is also used to extract dye.

3. Leaves are used to feed elephants and camels.

4. Juice prepared from bark is used as a mouthwash for curing toothache and weak gums.

5. Figs are used as laxative and also to cure asthma.

6. Young shoots and leaves are purgative.

7. It has religious importance in India and is grown in many temples.

Plant description: It is a large deciduous, fast-growing tree.

Root- Tap root and branched; Stem- Aerial, erect, cylindrical and woody with upswept branches; bark- light grey in colour, smooth when young, becomes rough and scabby in patches at maturity.

Leaf- Simple, alternate, triangular with broad heart shaped base, smooth, glossy, long pointed tip, petiole long, young leaves often pink in colour, become green after attaining maturity, margins wavy, midrib prominent.

Inflorescence- Hypanthodium.

Flower- Three types of flowers-male, female and neutral, inconspicuous and not showy.

Fruit- Fruit- Figs in pairs, sessile, smooth, greenish yellow at first turning to deep purple as they mature, almost black when ripe.

Some close up pictures of plant part