Pithecellobium dulce

Pithecellobium dulce, commonly known as Manila tamarind, is a tree that grows to a height of about 10 to 15 meters (33 to 49 feet).



The tree features a spiny trunk with a girth of up to 9 meters (9.4 feet thick at breast height). Its leaves are bipinnate, each pinna bearing a single pair of ovate-oblong leaflets measuring approximately 2 to 4 cm (0.79 to 1.57 inches) in length.

The greenish-white flowers are fragrant, sessile, and reach around 12 cm (4.7 inches) in length, although they appear shorter due to their coiled structure.

These flowers develop into pods that turn pink when ripe, revealing seed arils covered in a pink or white edible pulp. Inside the pulp are black, shiny seeds that are circular and flat. The tree's pollen is a polyad composed of many pollen grains joined together.

The seeds of Pithecellobium dulce are dispersed by birds that consume the sweet pulp. The tree is highly drought-resistant and can thrive in dry areas ranging from sea level to elevations of 1,500 meters (4,900 feet), making it an ideal choice for planting along streets.

MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

In India, the bark of Pithecellobium dulce is traditionally used as an astringent for treating dysentery. Historically, it has been noted for its antipyretic properties and used for eye inflammation, though there are anecdotal reports from Sri Lanka suggesting that the bark might cause eye infections and swelling of the eyelids.

The Huastec people from northern Veracruz and San Luis Potosí in Mexico utilized various parts of the tree to address gum diseases, toothaches, and even cancer.

The leaves of the tree are reputedly used in a poultice with alcohol to treat bile issues and to prevent miscarriages, though they are also mentioned in some contexts as being used to induce abortions.

The fruit pulp is considered astringent and hemostatic, and it has been used to treat hemoptysis. Additionally, the ground seeds have been traditionally used to clean ulcers.

Unspecified parts of the plant are believed to be used in extracts for treating hemorrhages, chronic diarrhea, and tuberculosis.