

## **Polyalthia longifolia**

Kingdom: Plantae  
Clade: Angiosperms  
Order: Magnoliales  
Family: Annonaceae  
Genus: Polyalthia  
Species: *P. longifolia*



*Polyalthia longifolia*, commonly known as the Indian mast tree or false ashoka, is referred to by various names in different Indian languages:

Hindi: Ashoka, Debdaru  
Tamil: Nettilingam  
Telugu: Ashoka  
Kannada: Ashoka  
Marathi: Ashoka  
Malayalam: Aranamaram  
Bengali: Debdaru  
Gujarati: Ashok  
Punjabi: Ashok  
Odia: Debadaru

### **Characteristic features**

**Origin:** Native to the Indian subcontinent.

**Growth:** *Polyalthia longifolia* is a tall, slender evergreen tree that can reach heights of up to 1520 meters (about 4966 feet).

**Leaves:** The leaves are lanceolate, glossy, and wavy edged, with a vibrant green colour that adds to its ornamental appeal.

**Flowers:** Small, star shaped, greenish yellow flowers bloom in clusters from the leaf axils. They have a mild fragrance and typically bloom from February to April.

**Fruits:** The fruit is a small, dark purple to black berry that contains a single seed.

**Habitat**

**Range:** Found in tropical and subtropical regions. Prefers well drained soils and can tolerate a range of conditions from full sun to partial shade.

**Soil:** Thrives in fertile, well drained soils but can adapt to various soil types, including sandy and clayey soils.

**Climate:** Prefers warm, humid climates and can tolerate moderate drought conditions once established.



## Uses

### 1. Ornamental:

**Landscaping:** Popular as an ornamental tree in gardens, parks, and along avenues due to its symmetrical shape and attractive foliage.

**Hedges and Screens:** Often planted as a natural screen or hedge because of its dense, columnar growth.

### 2. Traditional Medicine:

**Medicinal Uses:** Various parts of the tree, including leaves, bark, and seeds, are used in traditional medicine. It is believed to have anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and antiulcer properties. Used to treat fever, skin diseases, and digestive issues.

### 3. Timber:

**Wood Characteristics:** The wood is light and relatively durable. It is used for making furniture, small tools, and other wooden items.

### 4. Environmental Benefits:

**Air Purification:** Known for its ability to filter dust and pollutants from the air, making it a popular choice for urban planting.

### 5. Ecological Role:

**Habitat:** Provides habitat and food for various species of birds and insects. The flowers attract pollinators like bees and butterflies.

### 6. Cultural Significance:

**Religious and Cultural Uses:** Often planted around temples and used in religious ceremonies in India. The tree is considered sacred in some cultures and is associated with various myths and legends.

## Cultivation and Care:

**Propagation:** Propagated through seeds, cuttings, or air layering. Seeds should be sown in well drained soil and kept moist until germination.

**Planting:** Prefers full sun to partial shade and well drained soil. Planting during the monsoon season ensures good establishment.

**Watering:** Requires regular watering, especially during dry periods. Established trees are relatively drought tolerant.

**Pruning:** Minimal pruning is needed to maintain its shape. Remove any dead or damaged branches to promote healthy growth.

