

Trees in and around Coimbatore

By

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Introduction: Coimbatore town, the head-quarters of the district is fairly close to the Nilgiri hills on the Madras-Nilgiri railway line. The town is nearly 1,400 feet above sea level and has a very picturesque situation, with the lofty blue hills of the Western Ghats rising on the west, and the Noyyil river running to the south, while the east and the north are vast stretches of fields mainly of black soil. A marked feature of the district, which is also shared by the town, is the presence of numerous wells, with lift irrigation mostly by electric power. The town gets an annual rainfall of only about 25 inches but the industry of the ryots has enabled them to practise agriculture in a very efficient manner, so much so that one can see plenty of green vegetation everywhere. Since 1935 the town has been getting a good supply of Siruvani water, especially in the lower parts of the town. Siruvani water being obtained from a catchment area in the Western ghats by tunnel and pipe-line, is better suited for irrigation than well-water which tends to be brackish and is injurious to plants. It has no doubt helped in the growing of a good number of plants of varied nature, both indigenous and exotic. The municipal parks, and the gardens of some of the wealthy households show what is possible with a good water supply.

In this article an attempt has been made to list about 100 tree species which are seen in the town. This indicates that, provided care is taken, Coimbatore climatic conditions are such that the growing of many ornamental and useful trees is quite practicable. It is the hope of the authors that this note will serve the purpose of stimulating interest in the flora of the town. It is not claimed that the list exhausts all the tree species in the town. The list gives the botanical name first, then its popular name, and then its special features and uses.

1. *Acacia arabica*, Willd. Leguminosae (Mimosae)—Black Babool—*Karu-vel*—A small tree with spreading branches and stipular thorns. Wood—Useful for fuel purposes; pods serve as good fodder for sheep and goats. Agricultural implements etc. Indigenous.
2. *Acacia alba*. Willd. Leguminosae—White Babool—*Vel Vel*. A large tree with spreading branches and hard wood—Useful for fuel—Pods used for fodder. Good for paddocks. Indigenous.

3. *Achras sapota*, L. Sapotaceae—Sapodilla—Sapota—A medium-sized, symmetrical tree with dark-green, leathery, shining leaves—Native of Tropical America and West Indies. The fruits are very delicious.
4. *Adenanthera pavonina*, Linn. Leguminosae—Bead tree—*Anai kundumani*. A tall, quick-growing, upright tree with small, pinnate leaves and light open foliage. The hard, bright red seeds are characteristic and ornamental. Introduced.
5. *Aegle marmelos*, Correa. Rutaceae—Bael fruit—*Vilvam*. A medium-sized, spiny tree with small trifoliate leaves, native of India. The fruits are edible and are used in native medicine. The plant is sacred to Hindus. The young shoots and leaves are eaten by goats and cattle.
6. *Ailanthus excelsa* Roxb. Simarubaceae—Tree of heaven—*Pee Maram*—A large, handsome, quick-growing tree with large pinnate leaves—Native of India. A striking tree for landscape effect. Wood light, soft.
7. *Alangium salvi-folium*, Wang. Alangiaceae—Alangi—A deciduous, slow-growing small tree with spines and white flowers—Wood good for fuel and for ornamental work. Indigenous.
8. *Albizzia amara*, Bow. Leguminosae—*Usil*, *Uival*—A large tree which comes up well under dry conditions with a little care. The leaves form a good fodder for cattle, sheep and goats. Indigenous.
9. *Albizzia Lebbeck*, Leguminosae—Parrot tree—*Vakai*—A large tree with fine foliage; native of Tropical Asia and Africa. Often planted for shade. Leaves form a good fodder. Excellent brown timber which does not readily warp. Leaves used for green manure.
10. *Anona reticulata*, Linn. Anonaceae—Custard apple—Bullock's heart or *Seetha*. A small, bushy tree of Tropical America and West Indies. Grown for its edible fruits.
11. *Anona muricata*, Linn. Anonaceae—Sour sop—*Sitha*. A small, quick-growing, shrubby tree with fragrant laurel-like leaves, native of West Indies and commonly grown in the Tropics. Pulp of the fruit edible.

12. *Anona squamosa*, Linn. Anonaceae—Sweet sop. Sugar apple—A small, diffuse tree. Native of West Indies, introduced for the sake of its edible fruit.
13. *Anogeissus latifolia*, Wall. Combretaceae—*Vella nagai*. A large tree which comes up well in plains and up to 4,000 ft. The wood is hard and valuable for timber and agricultural implements. The leaves form a good fodder. Indigenous.
14. *Artocarpus integrifolia*, Linn. Moraceae—*Pila*. A large, evergreen tree. Wood useful for many purposes. Ripe and unripe fruits useful as dessert and vegetable respectively. The leaves are much relished by animals. Indigenous.
15. *Auracaria excelsa*, R. M. Coniferae—Bunya Bunya pine—Monkey puzzle tree. A tall tree of Queensland. It bears branches down to the ground; the small leaves are stiff and closely-set ending in sharp points. Ornamental.
16. *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss. Meliaceae—Margosa—Neem. *Vembu*—A small or medium-sized evergreen with straight stem and small, pinnate leaves, highly medicinal. Indigenous.
17. *Bassia latifolia*, Rox. Sapotaceae—Indian Butter tree—*Mahuva*, *Illupai*. A large, spreading, handsome tree with broad leaves, common in Central India. Flowers edible. Leaves, flowers and fruits eaten by cattle. Spirit is extracted from flowers. The cake is a good fertiliser. Indigenous.
18. *Bassia longifolia*, L. Sapotaceae—Similar to the above, except for the leaves, which are narrower. Common in South India.
19. *Bambusa arundinacea*, Willd. Gramineae—Spiny Bamboo—A tall, gigantic grass, all the parts which are made use of for various domestic purposes. Indigenous.
20. *Bauhinia malabarica*, Roxb. Leguminosae Malaganthi—Planted as ornamental tree. Indigenous.
21. *Bauhinia purpurea*, Linn. Leguminosae—*Mandarais*. With a little care and watering comes up well and can be planted as ornamental tree. The leaves are eaten by cattle, sheep and goats. Indigenous.

22. *Bauhinia varie-* : *Segapu manchori*. Comes up well under dry
gata, Linn. conditions as an ornamental tree. The leaves
are relished by cattle, sheep and goats.
23. *Borassus* : *Palmae—Palmyra—Tar palm or Brab palm—*
flabellifer, Linn. *Panai*—A tall palm with a crown of fanlike
fronds. All the parts of the tree are very
useful. Indigenous.
24. *Bombax mala-* : *Bombaceae—Red cotton tree—Kattu imbul or*
baricum, D. *Paruthi*—A very large, handsome upright
quick-growing, deciduous tree. The soft wood
is used for making tea chests and matches.
Indigenous.
25. *Bridelia retusa*, : *Euphorbiaceae—Mulvengai*—Grows into a small
Spr. and moderate-sized tree. This is useful as fuel
and fodder. Indigenous.
26. *Butea frondosa*, : *Leguminosae—Porasu*—A well-spread, medium-
Koen. sized tree which comes up well in heavy soils
and in black cotton soil. The leaflets are large
and serve as plates for taking food, also
forms fodder for cattle, sheep and goats.
Indigenous.
27. *Calopyllum* : *Guttiferae—Alexandrian laurel, Common poon,*
inophyllum, Linn. *Pinnai*. A moderate-sized, evergreen tree
with broadly elliptic, shiny, leathery, medicinal
big leaves. A greenish-coloured oil is extracted
from the seeds. Introduced.
28. *Cassia fistula*, Linn. : *Leguminosae—Indian Laburnum—Sarakkonai*.
Avenue tree. Cattle relish the leaves. A
small, upright tree, beautiful in blossom and
indigenous in India. The bark used in tanning
and medicine. The pods are useful as a laxative.
29. *Cassia siamea*, Linn. : *Leguminosae — Manjakkonnai*—Moderate-sized
tree. Native of Malaya. The leaves are eaten
by animals. The wood is used for shelves and
walking sticks etc. due to its hardness and
durability.
30. *Carica papaya*, Linn. : *Caricaceae—The papaw or Pappali*—A fast-
growing, small, herbaceous, branchless and
usually dioecious tree. Indigenous to Central
America and West Indies. Cultivated through-
out the tropics for its edible fruits.

31. *Casuarina equisetifolia*, Forst. Casuarinaceae—*Casuarina* tree, *Charukku*—A tall, evergreen tree with needle-shaped stems—(Cladode) Very good for fuel and as wind-breaks. Introduced.
32. *Cananga odorata*, H. F. Anonaceae—A tall, quick-growing tree. Native of Malaya and cultivated for the scented flowers in gardens and houses.
33. *Caryota urens*, L. Palmae—Toddy palm—White palm. *Koondhal panai*. A very handsome palm with large, spreading, bipinnate leaves, indigenous to Malaya and India. Toddy and brown sugar can be extracted.
34. *Ceasalpinia coriaria*, Ceasalpinoideae—*Divi divi*—A small branching tree. Native of South America, cultivated for its pods which are valuable in tannery. It is also grown as an avenue tree.
35. *Chloroxylon swietenia* Dc. Rutaceae—Satin wood. *Purush*. A conspicuous and pretty tree with rough, yellowish corky bark and yellow, close-grained wood, valuable for turnery and furniture. Indigenous.
36. *Cordia sebestena*, Forsk. Boraginaceae—Rough-leaved sebeston. Native of West Indies. A small tree found in gardens. Introduced.
37. *Commiphora caudata*, Eng. Burseraceae, *Kiluvai*—A deciduous tree with papery bark and greyish, soft wood used for pandals. Indigenous.
38. *Couroupita guianensis*, Antle. Myrtaceae—Cannon ball tree. *Nagalingam*—This is remarkable with its curious shaped, large pink and white fleshy flowers, crowded along the trunk from base upwards. Introduced.
39. *Cocos nucifera*, L. Palmae—Coconut palm—*Thennai*—A tall, tree, all parts of which are of great economic value. Indigenous.
40. *Crataeva religiosa*, Forst. Capparideae—*Mavinga*—A small or medium sized tree with broad, terminal corymbs of white flowers. Bark and leaves medicinal. Wood used for manufacture of drums. Indigenous.
41. *Dalbergia sisoo*, Rox. Leguminosae—Sisoo tree—*Yeeti*—A large, deciduous tree. Found throughout India. Cultivated as avenue tree. Yields a very strong timber for the manufacture of wheels. Introduced.

42. *Dalbergia paniculata*, Rox. Leguminosae—*Valagi*—A large deciduous tree of India. Cultivated as avenue tree. Leaves and twigs are used as green manure.
43. *Delonix regia*, Ref. Leguminosae—Flamboyant—*Gul Mohur*. Native of Madagascar, introduced in India. Cultivated as avenue tree.
44. *Delonix elata*, Gamb. Leguminosae—*Vadanarayan*—A pretty, medium-sized tree with yellowish-white wood. Planted as avenue tree. Leaves and branches are used as green manure. Introduced.
45. *Dichrostachys cinerea*, W. & A. Leguminosae—A thorny shrub or small tree. Leaves and branches are used as green manure. Introduced.
46. *Enterolobium saman*, Prain. Leguminosae—Rain tree—Introduced from South America and grown as avenue tree—A quick-growing tree, producing plenty of foliage. Thrives well in places with moderate rainfall. Leaves form good fodder.
47. *Elaeodendron glaucum*, Pers. Celastraceae—A moderate-sized tree, occurring throughout the hotter parts of India.
48. *Erythrina indica*, Lamk. Leguminosae—Coral tree—*Kalyana Murungai*—A moderate-sized, deciduous tree with prickly stem and tall branches. Native of India. Leaves are very valuable for milch cows.
49. *Eucalyptus globulus*, L. Herit. Myrtaceae—Bluegum tree. *Karpura maram*. A lofty, gregarious tree native of Australia. Medicinal. The strong timber can be utilised for ship-building.
50. *Feronia elphantum*, correa. Rutaceae—Wood apple—*Vila*—A moderate-sized tree with sharp pickles. Pulp of the fruit edible. Native of Java. The leaves are eaten by sheep and goats.
51. *Ficus religiosa*, L. Moraceae—Pipal tree. *Arasu*—A large, deciduous tree. Epiphyte. Cultivated as avenue tree. Native of India, sacred to Hindus. The leaves are valuable fodder. Can be cultivated through cuttings. Indigenous.
52. *Ficus bengalensis*, Lin. Moraceae—*Alamaram*—A very large tree, which can be grown along roadsides under all conditions, on plains. The leaves are much relished by goats and also by sheep and cattle. Indigenous.

53. *Ficus glomerata*,
Roxb. Moraceae—*Athi*—This is found as shade or avenue tree—They are easily raised by cuttings. The leaves and the very young shoots are eaten by cattle, sheep and goats. Indigenous.
54. *Filicium decipiens*,
Thwait. Sapindaceae—False fern. *Kattu puvarasu*—A tree with elegant, fern-like leaves found in Western Ghats. Strong and valuable wood for building work. Indigenous.
55. *Gliricidia maculata*,
H. B. & K. Leguminosae—Madre or Madre de cocoa—A small, elegant, quick-growing tree introduced from W. Indies. The leaves are used as green manure. It forms a good shade tree in plantations. Introduced.
56. *Grevillea robusta*,
A. cum. Proteaceae—Silver Oak, A moderately-sized handsome tree of Australia, has been much cultivated in India for its pretty-grained wood and in tea estates as shade plants. Introduced.
57. *Guazuma tomentosa*,
Kunth. Sterculiaceae—*Rudhrakshakkai*—A tree, stellately hairy on the young twigs, generally distributed and frequently cultivated. Native of India.
58. *Guaiacum*
officinale, L. Zygophyllaceae—*Lignum vitae*. A evergreen tree with clusters of brilliant blue, umbellate flowers. Ornamental. Native of West Indies.
59. *Gyrocarpus*
americanus, Jacq. Hernandiaceae—A tall, deciduous tree common in South India. The seeds are made into rosaries and necklaces. Indigenous.
60. *Hardwickia binata*,
Roxb. Leguminosae—*Atcha* or *Kattidugu*—A tall tree, deciduous tree with small, yellowish flowers. Wood used for agricultural implements. Leaves useful for fodder and green manure. Indigenous.
61. *Heterophragma*
adenophyllum,
Seem. Bignoniaceae—A moderate-sized, deciduous tree. Native of Burma and Assam. Only timber is made use of. Introduced.
62. *Holoptelia*
incrifolia, Planch. Ulmaceae—Indian elm—*Ayil*—A large, deciduous tree used for fuel. Useful for avenue planting. Introduced.
63. *Jacaranda*
mimusaeifolia Rox. Bignoniaceae—A very elegant, ornamental tree with mauve, bell-shaped flowers. Native of Tropical America. Introduced.

64. *Kigelia pinnata*, DC. Bignoniaceae—Sausage tree—A moderate sized, evergreen tree with a spreading crown. Native of America and cultivated in India as avenue tree.
65. *Lagerstroemia flos-reginae*, Retz. Lythraceae—Queen's flower. A moderate sized, deciduous tree grown for its flowers. Ornamental. Native of India.
66. *Mangifera indica*, Linn. Anacardiaceae—Mango tree—*Ma*—A large, spreading, evergreen tree with dark green leathery foliage. Native of India. Cultivated for the sake of edible fruits.
67. *Manihot glaziovii*, Euphorbiaceae—Ceara rubber—Sometimes cultivated in gardens for rubber. Introduced.
68. *Michelia champaka* Linn. Magnoliaceae—A tall, handsome, evergreen tree with fragrant yellow flowers. Native of India.
69. *Millingtonia hortensis*, Linn. Bignoniaceae—Indian cork tree. *Maramalli*. A tall, evergreen tree, with straight trunk with drooping branches and dark foliage. Native of Burma. Cultivated for the sake of its sweet-smelling flowers. Ornamental.
70. *Mimusops elengi*, L. Sapotaceae—Spanish cherry—*Mahilamaram*—A large, evergreen tree—with dense crown of dark-green, shining foliage and star-shaped flowers. Native of India. Cultivated for the sake of its fragrant flowers.
71. *Moringa oleifera*, Lank. Moringaceae—Horse-radish tree—Drum-stick. A small, deciduous tree with brittle branches. Native of India—Cultivated for its unripe fruits.
72. *Morinda tinctoria*, Roxb. Rubiaceae—Dyeing Mulberry—*Nuna*—A moderate-sized, deciduous tree. Root yields yellow dye. Indigenous.
73. *Murraya Koenigii*, Spn. Rutaceae—Curry leaf. A small tree with very aromatic leaves which are added to curries. Indigenous.
74. *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* Linn. Oleaceae—Coral jasmine. *Pavala malli*—A small tree, rough with stiff hairs. An ornamental tree, sacred to Hindus. Introduced.
75. *Odina Wodier*, Roxb. Anacardiaceae—Indian Ash tree—*Odhya maram*—A small tree, native of Ceylon and India. A gum is obtained from the stems.

76. *Parkinsonia aculeata*, Linn. Leguminosae—Jerusalem thorn—A small tree with showy, yellow flowers, a native of tropical America, often growing wild.
77. *Peltophorum ferrugineum*, Benth. Leguminosae—Brazilletto wood. A large, quick-growing, symmetrical tree with a spreading top and fine, graceful, feathery foliage. Indigenous to Ceylon.
78. *Pithecolobium dulce*, Benth. Leguminosae—Manilla Tamarind—*Korukkuputti*. A middle-sized, evergreen, prickly tree indigenous to America. Cultivated as ornamental tree in India. It is often pruned for hedges. The arilled fruits are edible. The pods are eaten by cattle, the tender shoots and leaves by goats.
79. *Pisonia alba*, Span. Nyctagineae—Lettuce tree—Lady love, *Letchi-kottai*. A small, evergreen tree with striking, pale yellow leaves. Leaves used as fodder, medicine and vegetable. Indigenous.
80. *Plumeria acutifolia*, Poir. Apocynaceae—Pagoda tree—A common, conspicuous garden plant with thick, fleshy branchlets and flowers, white with pale yellow centre and fragrant. One variety has large red flowers. Introduced.
81. *Pongamia glabra*, Vent. Leguminosae—*Pungamaram*. A moderate-sized, deciduous tree. Native of India. Planted on roadsides. Oil is medicinal.
82. *Polyalthia longifolia*, var. *pendula* Benth. Anonacea—Nettlingam or *Ashok*. A tall, handsome, evergreen tree with narrow lance-shaped and wavy margined leaves. Indigenous to Ceylon and planted in India as roadside tree.
83. *Prosopis juliflora*, L. Leguminosae—Mesquite—Small, thorny tree of Mexico. Leaves, shoots and pods used fodder. An ideal live fence.
84. *Psidium guajava*, L. Myrtaceae—Guava—*Koyya*—A small tree with thin, smooth bark. An American plant cultivated for its fruits, and often growing wild.
85. *Pterocarpus marsupium*, Roxb. Leguminosae—*Vengai*—A large tree, the timber is useful and a gum called "Kino" useful in medicine is obtained from this tree. Cattle, sheep and goats relish the leaves. Indigenous.

86. *Pterospermum suberifolium*, Lank. Sterculiaceae—Lance wood. *Thadai*. A large, handsome, evergreen tree with large, irregularly shaped leaves, green above and greyish-white beneath. Indigenous.
87. *Pterospermum Heyneanum*, Wall. Sterculiaceae—*Polavu*—A beautiful, ornamental tree of India.
88. *Punica multiflora*, (Granatum) Hort. Lythraceae—The pomegrante—*Mathulai*—Edible fruit. A medium-sized tree. Cultivated in most houses. Acclimatized.
89. *Ravenala madagascariensis*, som. Musaceae—Traveller's tree. A remarkable-looking tree with an appearance of a gigantic fan, grown in gardens. Native of Madagascar. Introduced.
90. *Sapindus emarginatus*, Wahl. Sapindaceae—Soapnut—*Puchi kottai*. A common, large-sized tree, the fruits of which are universally used as substitute for soap. Indigenous.
91. *Santalum album*, L. Santalaceae—Sandalwood tree. *Chandanam*. A small, evergreen, usually semi-parasitic, glabrous tree, cultivated for the sake of its scented heart-wood. Indigenous.
92. *Sesbania grandiflora*, Pers. Leguminosae—*Agathi*—A small, soft-wooded tree. Native of India and Australia. It is cultivated for the beautiful, showy flowers. Leaves are used as green manure and also as vegetable. The young shoots and leaves are greatly relished by cattle.
93. *Spathodea campanulata*, Beau. Bignoniaceae—An ornamental tree, introduced from tropical Africa, with large, orange, scarlet flowers.
94. *Swietenia mahagoni*. Meliaceae. Mahogany timber. A large, deciduous tree, native of Tropical America. Cultivated for the sake of the well-known timber, mahogany.
95. *Syzigium jambolanum*, De. Myrtaceae—Black plum—*Naval*. A large, evergreen tree with white flowers and purple fruit. Cultivated in avenues and topes for its edible fruit. Indigenous.
96. *Tamarindus indica*, L. Leguminosae—Tamarind tree—*Puli*. A large deciduous tree. Indigenous to Africa, grown for the fruits.

97. *Terminalia catapa*, L. Combretaceæ — Indian Almond. *Nattu badham*. A tall, deciduous tree, with broad, leathery leaves. Native of Andaman islands. Cultivated for the sake of its edible fruits.
98. *Terminalia bellerica*, Roxb. Combretaceæ — *Thani*. A large tree. The leaves are eaten by cattle, sheep and goats. Indigenous.
99. *Thespesia populnea*, Sand Cav. Malvaceæ — Portia tree — *Puvarasu*. It is a small tree, with broad leaves and yellow flowers. Native of India. Planted on roadsides.
100. *Zyziphus Jujuba*, Lam. Rhamnaceæ — Jujub tree — *ber* tree — *Ilandai*. A small, well-branched, thorny tree cultivated for the sake of the wood, a good fuel. The leaves are relished by sheep and goats. Indigenous.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we record the demise of Sri Ch. Venkatasaravayya Chetty, in October 1950, after a sudden illness. He was born in 1902. After graduating in agriculture in 1924, he took the Associateship of the then Imperial Agricultural Research Institute, Pusa. Later, he underwent special training in tobacco research in Sumatra, Java and in the United States of America. As a research worker, he has made a number of contributions to the knowledge of rice and tobacco.

He was a man of very pleasing manners, with great enthusiasm and industry in any work that he undertook.

We offer our heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.