White Silk Cotton Tree

Bombax ceiba

Code: XIM-T-035 **Location:** XIM University Campus **Local / Vernacular name:** ଶମ୍ଭିଳି

Description

XIM University campus biodiversity register (2026–27). Recorded individuals: 1; abundance rank: 47.

Botanical Details

Leaf habit: The white silk cotton tree is generally deciduous in nature, shedding its leaves seasonally, especially in drier periods. Flowering often occurs when the tree is leafless, which improves pollinator access to the nectar-rich flowers. Flowers / Fruits: The tree produces large, showy flowers that are typically white, pinkish, or pale in color and are rich in nectar, attracting many pollinators. After flowering, it forms fruit capsules that, when mature, split open to release masses of silky, white fibres (kapok) attached to the seeds. These fibres help seeds disperse widely by wind. Native range: native to tropical regions of the Americas (Central and South America) and West Africa, although it has been widely introduced and cultivated in South and Southeast Asia, Africa, and other tropical regions

Uses & Importance

Ecological: The white silk cotton tree plays an important role in tropical ecosystems. Its large stature and leafy canopy provide shade and habitat for birds, insects, and small animals. The nectarrich flowers attract pollinators such as bees and bats, helping sustain pollination networks. Its seeds are dispersed by wind thanks to the lightweight silky fibres, promoting forest regeneration. The tree also contributes to carbon sequestration and supports biodiversity in rainforest and secondary forest landscapes.

Medicinal: This tree is of high medicinal value; its roots and flowers are used for their stimulating, astringent and hemostatic properties, as an aphrodisiac, to stop diarrhoea, strengthen the heart, induce vomiting, soothe inflammation, treat dysentery, and lower fever. It also has antibacterial and antiviral properties, provides pain relief, protects the liver, acts as antioxidants, and lowers blood sugar levels. It is also used in agroforestry for livestock feed. The wood is strong, elastic and durable for ship building.

Cultural: Across tropical regions where it grows, the white silk cotton tree holds cultural significance. The soft, buoyant fibre (kapok) from its seed pods has been traditionally used as filling for pillows, mattresses, quilts, and upholstery, and earlier in history even in life jackets due to its water-resistant properties. The tree may be used in local ceremonies and is valued in folklore for its majestic presence in the landscape.

Location

GPS: 20.15860192, 85.76535449

Directions: https://www.google.com/maps/dir/?api=1&travelmode=walking&destination=20.15860192%2C85.76535449