

Tamarindus indica: Tamarind¹

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Introduction

A frost-tender, tropical, evergreen tree, tamarind is densely foliated with blue green to pale green, compound, feathery leaflets which give the broad, spreading crown a light, airy effect. Tamarind may reach heights of 65 feet and a spread of 50 feet but is more often seen smaller. The delicate leaflets cast a diffuse, dappled shade which will allow enough sunlight to penetrate for a lawn to thrive beneath this upright, dome-shaped tree.

General Information

Scientific name: *Tamarindus indica* Pronunciation: tam-uh-RIN-dus IN-dih-kuh Common name(s): tamarind Family: *Fabaceae* USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Figure 2) Origin: native to tropical Africa and Madagascar UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended Uses: street without sidewalk; shade; specimen; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

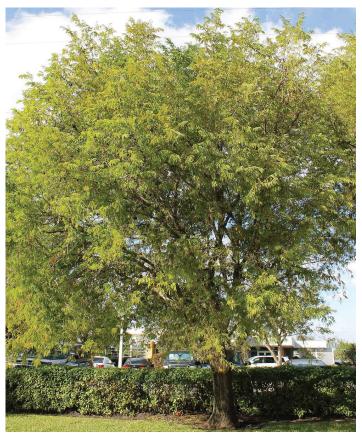


Figure 1. Full Form—Tamarindus indica: tamarind

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 40 to 65 feet Spread: 40 to 50 feet Crown uniformity: irregular Crown shape: vase, round Crown density: dense Growth rate: moderate Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate Leaf type: even-pinnately compound; made up of 10 to 15 pairs of leaflets Leaf margin: entire Leaf shape: elliptic Leaf venation: pinnate Leaf type and persistence: evergreen Leaf blade length: 2 to 5 inches; leaflets are ½ to ¾ inch Leaf color: blue green to pale green on top, paler green underneath Fall color: no color change Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: pale yellow with reddish pink veins Flower characteristics: not showy; 3 petals; emerges in clusters on 6" long, pendulant racemes Flowering: late spring to summer

Fruit

Fruit shape: slightly curved, indehiscent pod
Fruit length: 2 to 7 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard; velvety
Fruit color: turns from green to brown when mature
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/ leaves a litter problem
Fruiting: late fall to early summer



Figure 3. Leaf—Tamarindus indica: tamarind



Figure 4. Flower-Tamarindus indica: tamarind

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/ranches: branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; no thorns Bark: gray brown to blackish and rough, with vertical fissures and horizontal cracks Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure Breakage: resistant Current year twig color: green, gray Current year twig thickness: thin Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 5. Fruit—Tamarindus indica: tamarind



Figure 6. Bark—*Tamarindus indica*: tamarind Credits: Gitta Hasing

Culture

Light requirement: full sun Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained Drought tolerance: high Aerosol salt tolerance: low to moderate

Other

Roots: not a problem Winter interest: no Outstanding tree: yes Ozone sensitivity: unknown Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

The twigs and branches of tamarind are very resistant to wind, making it especially useful as a shade or street tree for breezy locations. But tamarind has low salt-tolerance so do not locate it close to the beach. In spring, small yellow and red flowers appear on short racemes and are followed by the production of brittle, brown, seven-inch-long, velvety pods. These sticky pods are filled with a sweet-sour, dark brown paste which surrounds two or three seeds. They normally dry up and do not become messy, but some people will undoubtedly object to the fruit falling on sidewalks or streets. Tamarind is grown commercially in the tropics for production of this edible paste, which is used as an ingredient for Worcestershire sauce, soft drinks, chutneys, and curries.

Tamarind should be grown only in frost-free regions in full sun on moist, fertile, sandy soil. It survived 26 degrees for several hours in West Palm Beach in the mid-1980s. Care should be taken in the placement of tamarind as the seed pods may be messy for a short period when they drop on hard surfaces. Also, be sure to maintain a strong tree structure including major branches well-spaced along one central trunk.

Propagation is by seeds which germinate readily or by cuttings. If quality fruit is desired, plants should be air-layered, grafted, or shield-budded.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.