



# **BEAUTIFUL TREES AND SHRUBS OF CALCUTTA**

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**Botanical Survey of India  
Department of Environment**

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*Beautiful Trees  
and  
Shrubs of Calcutta*

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*Cover photos:*

Front : Victoria Memorial Hall and Gardens

*Delonix regia* (Boj. ex Hook.) Raf. (bottom)

Back : *Bombax ceiba* L. (top)

*Couroupita guianensis* Aubl. (bottom)

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## *Foreword*

The metropolis of Calcutta has passed through different phases of its growth since the advent of East India Company. It had once been the Capital of India, and now the Capital of West Bengal. For obvious reasons, plants from various parts of the world have been introduced in the city, mostly through the initial efforts of East India Company, which coupled with its indigenous flora provide with a remarkable mixture of Western and Eastern elements. In view of the humidity, rainfall and temperature of Calcutta, the variety and wealth of its vegetation need no occasion for surprise. The cosmopolitan nature of the city is also reflected in its vegetational wealth.

Ornamental plants not only add to the aesthetics of the city but provide with a remarkable input to the beautification and purification of the environment. Heavy industrialization, urbanization and growth of skyscrapers, have undoubtedly caused serious environmental problems but there are still avenues and promenades in Calcutta, the relics of the past, which are full of beautiful trees and shrubs. Their blooming at different seasons makes the city remarkably colourful.

There are almost one hundred species included in this book with profuse illustrations and colour photographs. The most commendable feature is the history of introduction, rationale, uses and distribution. The phasic development of the vegetation of Calcutta concomitant with other phases of growth has also been neatly outlined by the authors. Most of the species, however, are common to different parts of India and as such will be of interest to a vast section of readers.

such names are marked with an asterisk (\*). We have tried to make this name as relevant to the features of the plant as possible, and have added a few sentences to explain the etymology.

Local names are given in upper and small capitals as far as possible, for each plant, information is provided on its native country, significant horticultural features, plantations (or occurrence) in Calcutta, origin of its scientific name, brief description, flowering period or behaviour, important medicinal or other uses and on propagation or future potential.

Usually, the main species of a genus is treated; in some cases a brief reference is made to related species or varieties of ornamental value. Similarly in a few cases, the lesser important genera of a family are briefly mentioned at the end of last species of that family. The reason for omission of roses is due to the profusion of existing literature on this vast and beautiful group having hundreds of cultivars.

Though the title of this work says Calcutta, we are sure, the book should help in identification of most of the ornamental trees and shrubs in almost all cities and towns in plains of the Indian subcontinent.

We shall consider our effort duly rewarded if the book will prompt the reader to have a closer look at the trees around him, try to match with one of the color pictures and search for a sapling or packet of seeds to plant.

We express our sincere gratitude to Dr. T. N. Khoshoo, Secretary, Government of India, Department of Environment, New Delhi for his interest and encouragement, and to Professor (Mrs.) Archana Sharma, Professor of Botany, University of Calcutta for her constant encouragement and valuable suggestions particularly in the activities of the Indian Botanic Garden.

For writing this book we had to visit and study many of the parks and gardens of the Government and private

institutions, public sector organisations as well as individual private gardens. We must record our special thanks to Sri R. K. Samanta of Calcutta Municipal Corporation, Dr. D. Mukherjee of Agri-Horticultural Society of India, Sri D. G. Jana of Raj Bhavan Gardens, Sri S. Bose of Assembly House Gardens, Dr. S. Bose of National Library and the authorities of the Victoria Memorial, CMDA, Bidhan Sishu Udyan, Eden Gardens, to the owners and gardeners of many private gardens in the city.

We are thankful to many of our colleagues in the Botanical Survey of India, specially to Dr. D. B. Deb, Sri R. K. Basak, Dr. N. C. Majumdar, Dr. D. P. Mukhopadhyay, Sri R. L. Mitra, Sri H. S. Pandey, Sri H. J. Basu, Sri S. K. Das and Sri R. N. Das.

Most of the photographs are taken by the authors. But for allowing us to publish the photographs of *Anthocephalus chinensis*, *Dillenia burbridgii* (fruits), *Gustavia augusta*, *Kigelia pinnata*, *Magnolia pterocarpa*, *Pachira aquatica*, *Pandanus odoratissimus* (fruits) and *Wrightia tomentosa* in this book, we are most thankful to Sri A. P. Bhattacharyya of the Indian Botanic Garden.

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May 4, 1984

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*"I should like our children  
especially to know more  
about indigenous flora  
and fauna"*

—Indira Gandhi



# *Contents*

Foreword	...	iii
Preface	...	v
Introduction	...	1
Trees and Shrubs	...	20
Some Useful Literature	...	183
Index	...	185

*“Some of our own wild life has been wiped out,  
miles of forests with beautiful old trees  
mute witness of history,  
have been destroyed”*

—Indira Gandhi