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Understanding the flora of the Western Ghats made easier with a pictorial manual

PREMIUM

The recently-launched *Forest Trees of Central Western Ghats – A Pictorial Field Manual* helps to understand and conserve flora found in the Karnataka region of the Western Ghats. The book is available free for in Forest Department offices

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YEMEN S.

Forest Type

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Fl & Fr: J F M A M J J A S O N D

Uses	Me	Ed	Or	Av	OU
Endemism	WG	BE			
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Vateria indica: 1) Tree, 2) Leafy branches with flowers, 3) Flower, 4) ...

Family: Dipterocarpaceae

Kannada name: Saal Dhoopa, Chandalika

English name: Indian Copal tree

Field Identification: Large trees with straight bole in wild. Bark smooth, grey, exudes gummy resinous sap on injury. Branches clothed with hoary stellate hairs. Petioles inflated near leaf base.

Botanical description: Leaves alternate, up to 24 x 15 cm, ovate or elliptic-oblong, apex acute, cordate or rounded at base, lateral nerves prominent beneath, marked above. Flowers to 1.9 cm across, white, fragrant, in terminal panicles. Petals 5. Stamens numerous; anthers nearly sessile. Ovary 3-celled. Fruit a capsule, 2-6 cm long, ovoid, brownish. Seeds large.

Habitat: Very rare in wild, mostly found in evergreen to semi-evergreen sacred groves and undisturbed forest. Planted as avenue tree.

Uses: The tree produces Indian dammer which is a valuable varnish. The seeds yield a vegetable butter known as 'Malabar tallow', used for manufacture of candles and soaps. Hanuman Langur and other wild animals feed on the foliage, Nilgiri Langur on leaf and fruit. Bonnet Macaque feed on fruits. Hornbills favor the tree for nesting.

Distribution in Uttara Kannada

An image from the book on how to identify an endemic *Vateria indica* tree flowering branch. | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Extreme weather events such as cyclones, sudden floods, and heatwaves have been lashing different regions of India over the last few years. In 2021, the Indian Institute of

Sciences (IISc) cautioned that by 2050 parts of the Western Ghats would be lost to harsh climatic conditions.

Amid concerns about climate change and its impact on the Sahyadri mountain range, biologists and nature lovers have come up with a pictorial manual to help identify, understand, and conserve the vast flora found in the Karnataka region of the Western Ghats.

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