

Ficus Varieties

While the Banyan and the Peepal are the most prominent ficus species in Mumbai, the city offers many challenges and joys for the ficus lover and spotter. Here are some species that grace the city:

Indian Rubber Tree

Common name: Indian Rubber Tree

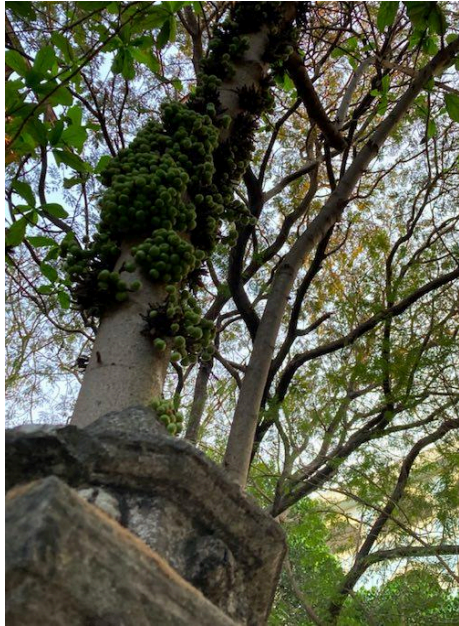
Scientific name: *Ficus elastica*



The evergreen Indian Rubber Tree is easy to identify because of its large, glossy, leathery leaves and the fact that the leaf buds are covered in a reddish pick scale that falls off eventually. Like the Banyan, this is a strangler fig with aerial roots and is pollinated by a particular species of wasp. The figs are small and yellow-green.

A native to North East India, the Indian Rubber Tree is no longer used to produce Indian rubber, but is tapped for latex. Its roots are woven together to form the famous aerial root bridges of Meghalaya.

Hairy Fig



Common names: Bokeda, Hairy fig

Scientific name: *Ficus hispida*

This is a small and unassuming ficus without aerial roots. The leaves are rough, with hairy undersides and figs which grow in clusters.

The fruit, seeds and bark are emetics. Traditionally, parts of the plant have been used to treat psoriasis, jaundice, anaemia and ulcers.

Umbar

Common names: Umbar,

Country Fig, Goolar

Scientific name: *Ficus*

Racemosa

This is a pretty evergreen fig tree with a crooked trunk and figs which grow in green and red clusters. The fig is a great favourite of monkeys, squirrels and deer and it is often referred to as the Wild Edible Fig.



It is supposed to have originated in the Indo-Malayan region and it can be spotted across Mumbai, on pavements and gardens. According to a grandmother's tale, people who were able to spot the flowers of the goolar would find a treasure – a most unfair story because the tiny flowers of the tree are enclosed within the fig.

The Umbar is considered a sacred tree and is planted next to temples. A lotion prepared with the tree's bark is used to treat the injuries caused by tigers' claws.