

# Gulmohar and Copper Pod

Two beautiful trees that seem to embody the colourful spirit of Mumbai are the gulmohar tree and the copper pod tree. Read on to learn more about them!



## Gulmohar Tree

(also called the Royal Poinciana)

Species name: *Delonix regia*

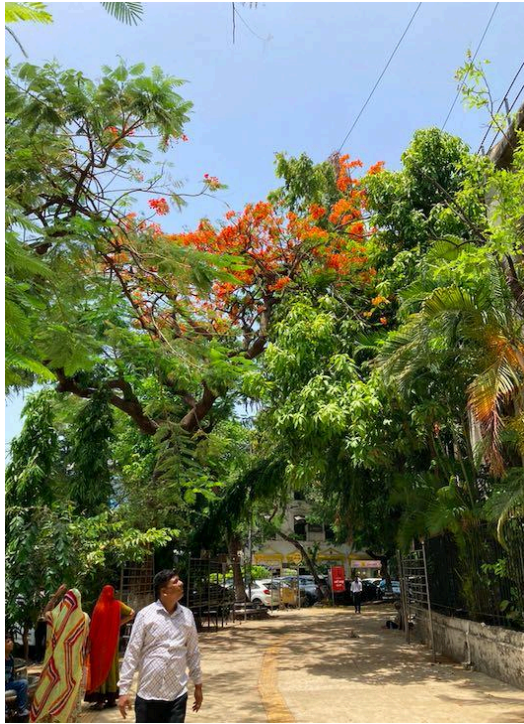
Native to Madagascar

“Poinciana Your Branches Speak To Me Of Love”

- Buddy Bernier

## History, Culture, and Religion

Wenceslas Bojer, a botanist from what is now the Czech Republic discovered the tree in Madagascar. From Mauritius, the tree spread worldwide, and records suggest it was introduced to India by the British and first planted in Sewri on Waterloo Day. (Bombay Times, August 24, 1856).



A belief of the St. Thomas Christians of Kerala is that Jesus Christ's blood spilled on the flowers of a gulmohar tree during his crucifixion on Mount Cavalry, and that this resulted in the bright red of the tree's flowers. For this reason, the gulmohar tree is called kaalvarippoo in Kerala, which translates to 'the flower of Cavalry'. In Mumbai, it is called the Pentecost as well, because peak bloom is reached at around the time of the Pentecost Festival that takes place 50 days after Easter Sunday.

### **Identifying the gulmohar tree**

This deciduous tree is commonly seen along the roads of Mumbai city and is easily identifiable with its bipinnately compound leaves and bright flowers, which are a distinct orange-red on 4 of 5 of its petals. The odd petal is white streaked with yellow and red.

At the start of the monsoons in Mumbai, the streets are carpeted with wet orange-red petals of the tree's fallen flowers. The tree has fallen out of favour with environmentalists since it frequently falls within the monsoon and is criticised for being an exotic species. For many Mumbaikars, however, its blooms are as much a part of the summer holidays as mangos and prickly heat.



Read on to find out about the copper pod tree.

## Copper pod tree

Species Name: *Peltophorum pterocarpum*



The tree is native to the Indo-Malayan area, but specifically within India it is native only to the Andamans.

The copper pod is an avenue tree shaped like an umbrella that is often grown along the roads of Mumbai with yellow, scented flowers and bipinnately compound dark green leaves, resembling those of the gulmohar tree.

It is also called the sonmohar tree in Hindi because of the colour of its flowers- 'son' is the Hindi word for gold. The copper pod tree flowers from April to July and September to November. The flower can be used to make a yellow dye and a brown dye derived from the bark is used for batik. In folk medicine, the bark of the copper pod tree is used to treat intestinal problems and the leaves are crushed to make a paste to heal wounds.

