

CYATHEACEAE

Alsophila gigantea Wall. ex Hook. [= *Cyathea gigantea* (Wall. ex Hook.) Holttum; *Alsophila balakrishnanii* (R.D. Dixit & A.K. Tripathi) R.D. Dixit; *Cyathea balakrishnanii* R.D. Dixit & A.K. Tripathi; *Alsophila balakrishnanii* (R.D. Dixit & A.K. Tripathi) Panigrahi]

Common English name : Tree fern.

Distribution : INDIA: West Bengal (Darjeeling), Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala; CHINA; BANGLADESH; NEPAL; SRI LANKA; MYANMAR; THAILAND; LAOS and VIETNAM.



Habitat : Along water channels.

Population status : Least Concern. Grown as an ornamental. It is exploited for starch and the frond is used for growing epiphytic orchids.

Description : Tree fern, 1-3 m tall with a loose crown of leaves; rhizome massive. Fronds herbaceous or submembranaceous, tufted; stipes more than one metre long, castaneous or reddish-purple or black, upper part more or less glabrous; scales black and castaneous on stipe base, 10-12 × 1-2 mm, middle portion dark brown; few deciduous scales on rachis and costae. Pinnules short stalked, 5-12.5 × 1.5-2.5 cm, gradually narrowed towards apex, distinctly lobed up to 2/3rd of costa; costules 4-7 mm apart; veins 2-6 pairs; basal basioscopic vein usually from costa, herbaceous, dark green on upper surface, light green on lower surface, margins strongly crenate. Sori exindusiate, basal ones away from costules, upper ones close to costule; paraphyses dark brown, shorter than sporangia. Pinna rachis dark purplish, smooth, glabrescent or with a few small residual scales. Sori round, exindusiate, closer at top of pinnulet and wide apart at base.

References :

- Jain, S.K. & A.R.K. Sastry (1980). Threatened Plants of India. A State-of-the Art Report. P. 19.
Mudgal, V. & P.K. Hajra (1997). Floristic Diversity and Conservation Strategies in India. Vol. 1, p. 409.