

MAHARASHTRA

State Flower: Mota-bondara, Tamhan (Marathi).

Botanical Name: *Lagerstroemia speciosa* (L.) Pers.

Family: Lythraceae.

Common Names: Queen Crape Myrtle, Pride of India (English); Jarul (Hindi); Challa, Hole-dasavala (Kanada); Syandana, Tinisa (Sanskrit); Kadali (Tamil).

Etymology: The generic name, *Lagerstroemia* was given by Linnaeus in honour of his friend, Magnus von Lagerström, a Swedish naturalist and manager of East India Company; specific epithet, *speciosa* means showy, referring to the flowers.



Description: Medium-sized, deciduous trees, with a rounded crown; bark smooth, greyish, exfoliating in irregular flakes. Leaves simple, opposite, oblong-lanceolate or elliptic. Flowers in large showy panicles, mauve to purple-coloured. Calyx bell-shaped, 6-lobed. Petals 6, free, clawed, wrinkled. Stamens many. Fruit a woody capsule with apically winged seeds, ribbed.

Flowering: April – June; **Fruiting:** Throughout the year.

Distribution: Bangladesh, China, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Malaysia to New Guinea and Northeastern Australia. In India, it is found in Western Ghats and Assam growing at low to medium elevations in open habitats and forests. It is common in dry and moist deciduous forests of Maharashtra.

Economic Importance: A well-known ornamental tree grown for its elegant purple flowers. It is widely cultivated in gardens and as an avenue tree. Its timber used for building purposes, planking, ship building, piles, bridges and railway sleepers.

Medicinal Uses: Leaves are purgative, deobstruent and diuretic. Decoction of the bark is effective in treating abdominal pain and diarrhoea. The leaf poultice is used to alleviate malarial fever and also for healing cracked feet. The roots are considered astringent, stimulant and febrifuge and seeds are narcotic.

Propagation: Besides natural regeneration through seed germination, stem and root cuttings are also used for propagation.

J. Jayanthi

Botanical Survey of India, Western Regional Centre, Pune.