

Dalbergia sissoo: Indian Rosewood¹

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Introduction

A handsome specimen, shade, framing, or street tree, easily-grown semi-evergreen Indian Rosewood has delicate, light green, oval pointed leaflets and can quickly reach 60 feet in height with a 40-foot spread. The inconspicuous, very fragrant, yellowish or white flowers are followed by slender, flat, brown, one to four-seeded pods. The trunks yield a prized cabinet wood for fine furniture and the Rosewood genus is an important timber tree in India. There are many *Dalbergia* spp. grown in the tropical regions of the world for veneer and lumber. Though the wood is beautiful, the tree has a reputation for being brittle. Some of this may be due to improper pruning practices or inadequate training when the tree is young. Be sure that lateral branches remain smaller than two-thirds the trunk diameter to help ensure good tree structure. Remove branches with embedded bark in favor of those with strong, 'U'-shaped crotches. This could help keep the tree together in windstorms.

General Information

Scientific name: *Dalbergia sissoo*

Pronunciation: dal-BERG-ee-uh SIS-oo

Common name(s): indian rosewood

Family: Fabaceae

USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Figure 2)

Origin: native to India and Pakistan

UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: caution may be recommended, but manage to prevent escape (Central, South); not considered a problem species at this time, may be recommended (North)

Uses: shade; street without sidewalk; tree lawn 4–6 feet wide; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; parking lot island 100–200 sq ft; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; urban tolerant



Figure 1. Full Form - *Dalbergia sissoo*: indian rosewood

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Figure 2. Range

Description

Height: 45 to 60 feet

Spread: 30 to 40 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular

Crown shape: oval

Crown density: open

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: odd-pinnately compound; made up of 3 to 7 leaflets

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: orbiculate, elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate, brachidodrome

Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen

Leaf blade length: 6 inches; leaflets are 3 inches

Leaf color: green on top, paler green underneath

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: yellowish or white

Flower characteristics: not showy; fragrant; emerges in clusters on axillary panicles

Flowering: spring and summer

Fruit

Fruit shape: flat pod or pod-like, elongated

Fruit length: 2 to 4 inches

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: green to brown with maturity

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem



Figure 3. Leaf—*Dalbergia sissoo*: indian rosewood



Figure 4. Flower - *Dalbergia sissoo*: indian rosewood



Figure 5. Fruit - *Dalbergia sissoo*: indian rosewood

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/branches: branches droop; not showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

Bark: gray and smooth, becoming furrowed and rough with age

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: susceptible to breakage

Current year twig color: green, brown

Current year twig thickness: thin, medium

Wood specific gravity: unknown



Figure 6. Bark - *Dalbergia sissoo*: indian rosewood

Credits: Gitta Hasing

Culture

Light requirement: full sun to partial shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; acidic; well-drained to occasionally wet

Drought tolerance: moderate

Aerosol salt tolerance: low

Other

Roots: can form large surface roots

Winter interest: no

Outstanding tree: no

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: free of serious pests and diseases

Use and Management

Growing quickly in full sun or high shifting shade, Indian Rosewood will thrive on a variety of soils types, from dry to wet but is not particularly salt-tolerant. Young plants should be watered until well-established. Plants train easily into a well-formed single leader tree, which is desirable in urban landscapes. Sprouts often develop from the roots and become a maintenance problem and roots often lift sidewalks if planted too close. Surface roots often grow large in diameter and can become a nuisance. A number of horticulturists consider this to be a nuisance tree. The tree casts light shade due to the open canopy.

Propagation is by seed, which germinates better if planted when still within the pod.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Magnesium deficiency is common.

Reference

Koeser, A. K., Hasing, G., Friedman, M. H., and Irving, R. B. 2015. Trees: North & Central Florida. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.