

# Tamarindus indica: Tamarind<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

A frost-tender, tropical, evergreen tree, tamarind is densely foliated with blue green to pale green, compound, feathery leaflets which give the broad, spreading crown a light, airy effect. Tamarind may reach heights of 65 feet and a spread of 50 feet but is more often seen smaller. The delicate leaflets cast a diffuse, dappled shade which will allow enough sunlight to penetrate for a lawn to thrive beneath this upright, dome-shaped tree.

## **General Information**

Scientific name: Tamarindus indica

Pronunciation: tam-uh-RIN-dus IN-dih-kuh

Common name(s): tamarind

Family: Fabaceae

USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Figure 2)
Origin: native to tropical Africa and Madagascar
UF/IFAS Invasive Assessment Status: not considered a
problem species at this time, may be recommended
Uses: street without sidewalk; shade; specimen; parking lot
island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

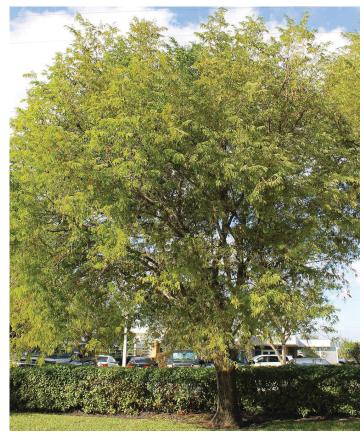


Figure 1. Full Form—Tamarindus indica: tamarind

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Figure 2. Range

# **Description**

**Height:** 40 to 65 feet **Spread:** 40 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: irregular Crown shape: vase, round Crown density: dense Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

## **Foliage**

Leaf arrangement: alternate

Leaf type: even-pinnately compound; made up of 10 to 15

pairs of leaflets
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic
Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 2 to 5 inches; leaflets are ½ to ¾ inch **Leaf color:** blue green to pale green on top, paler green

underneath

**Fall color:** no color change **Fall characteristic:** not showy

#### **Flower**

**Flower color:** pale yellow with reddish pink veins **Flower characteristics:** not showy; 3 petals; emerges in

clusters on 6" long, pendulant racemes **Flowering:** late spring to summer

### **Fruit**

Fruit shape: slightly curved, indehiscent pod

Fruit length: 2 to 7 inches

**Fruit covering:** dry or hard; velvety

**Fruit color:** turns from green to brown when mature **Fruit characteristics:** does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/

leaves a litter problem

Fruiting: late fall to early summer



Figure 3. Leaf—Tamarindus indica: tamarind



Figure 4. Flower—Tamarindus indica: tamarind

### **Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/ranches:** branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; no thorns

**Bark:** gray brown to blackish and rough, with vertical fissures and horizontal cracks

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: green, gray Current year twig thickness: thin Wood specific gravity: unknown

Tamarindus indica: Tamarind



Figure 5. Fruit—Tamarindus indica: tamarind



Figure 6. Bark—*Tamarindus indica*: tamarind Credits: Gitta Hasing

#### **Culture**

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic;

well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: low to moderate

#### Other

**Roots:** not a problem **Winter interest:** no

Outstanding tree: yes
Ozone sensitivity: unknown

**Verticillium wilt susceptibility:** unknown **Pest resistance:** free of serious pests and diseases

## **Use and Management**

The twigs and branches of tamarind are very resistant to wind, making it especially useful as a shade or street tree for breezy locations. But tamarind has low salt-tolerance so do not locate it close to the beach. In spring, small yellow and red flowers appear on short racemes and are followed by the production of brittle, brown, seven-inch-long, velvety pods. These sticky pods are filled with a sweet-sour, dark brown paste which surrounds two or three seeds. They normally dry up and do not become messy, but some people will undoubtedly object to the fruit falling on sidewalks or streets. Tamarind is grown commercially in the tropics for production of this edible paste, which is used as an ingredient for Worcestershire sauce, soft drinks, chutneys, and curries.

Tamarind should be grown only in frost-free regions in full sun on moist, fertile, sandy soil. It survived 26 degrees for several hours in West Palm Beach in the mid-1980s. Care should be taken in the placement of tamarind as the seed pods may be messy for a short period when they drop on hard surfaces. Also, be sure to maintain a strong tree structure including major branches well-spaced along one central trunk.

Propagation is by seeds which germinate readily or by cuttings. If quality fruit is desired, plants should be air-layered, grafted, or shield-budded.

#### **Pests and Diseases**

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

## Reference

Koeser, A.K., Friedman, M.H., Hasing, G., Finley, H., Schelb, J. 2017. Trees: South Florida and the Keys. Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

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