

Tamarindus indica: Tamarind¹

Edward F. Gilman and Dennis G. Watson²

Introduction

A frost-tender, tropical, evergreen tree, tamarind is densely foliated with 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.



Figure 1. Middle-aged *Tamarindus indica*: tamarind
Credits: Ed Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Tamarindus indica*

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

Common name(s): Tamarind

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: has been evaluated using the UF/IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas (Fox et al. 2005). This species is not documented in any undisturbed natural areas in Florida. Thus, it is not considered a problem species and may be used in Florida.

Uses: street without sidewalk; shade; specimen; parking lot island > 200 sq ft; tree lawn > 6 ft wide; highway median

Availability: not native to North America



Figure 2. Range

1. This document is ENH776, one of a series of the Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date November 1993. Revised March 2007. Reviewed February 2014. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.
2. Edward F. Gilman, professor, Environmental Horticulture Department; and Dennis G. Watson, former associate professor, Agricultural Engineering Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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Description

Height: 40 to 60 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 (Fig. 3)
Leaf type: even-pinnately compound
Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: elliptic (oval), oblong
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: evergreen
Leaf blade length: less than 2 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

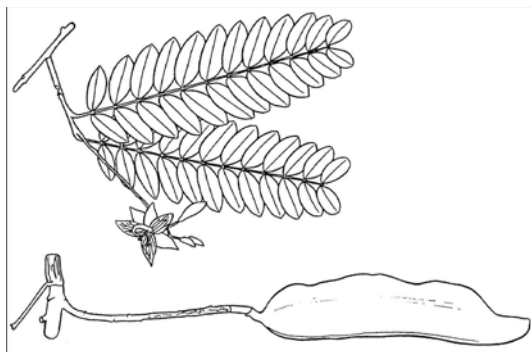


Figure 3. Foliage

Flower

Flower color: red, yellow
Flower characteristics: not showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: elongated, pod or pod-like
Fruit length: 3 to 6 inches
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; showy; fruit/leaves a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches droop; showy; typically one trunk; thorns
Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure
Breakage: resistant

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

Culture

Light requirement: full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; occasionally wet; well-drained
Drought tolerance: high
Aerosol salt tolerance: 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 red and yellow flowers appear on short racemes and are followed by the production of brittle, brown, six-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.

Literature Cited

Fox, A.M., D.R. Gordon, J.A. Dusky, L. Tyson, and R.K. Stocker (2005) UF/IFAS Assessment of the Status of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. Cited from the Internet (November 3, 2006), <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/assessment/>