

Central and South America

- Common names:** **Eng:** cow tamarind, monkey pod, rain tree, saman tree.
- Ecology:** Occurs most commonly in open country and along streams in forests in Central America and northern parts of South America. It requires no particular soil type and will grow equally well in sandy soils and heavy clays, and even in waterlogged places by rivers, in all areas below 1,300 m. Commonly grown at the coast.
- Uses:** Firewood, timber, tools, carving, food (sweet pulp of pods), fodder (pods, seeds), shade, ornamental, nitrogen fixation, soil improvement, gum, resin.
- Description:** A conspicuous **semi-deciduous tree** with a short, thick trunk, up to 6-8 m tall, its **branches spread horizontally** reaching an amazing 30 m occasionally. **BARK:** distinctive yellow to cream-brown, smooth. **LEAVES:** fern-like foliage, twice **compound leaves** at the end of branches, leaflets bright green, oblong, smooth, to 6 cm long, longest pairs at the end of the stalk. **FLOWERS:** **large stalked heads**, each flower with **fluffy pink stamens** from a cream-yellow base, 3-5 cm across. **FRUIT:** **pods to 20 x 2 cm, thick, straight, green then black, with an edible sticky pulp** around the seeds. Pods do not break open.
- Propagation:** Seedlings.
- Seed info.:** No. of seeds per kg: 5,000-7,400.
- treatment:** immerse seed in hot water for three minutes and allow to cool and soak for 24 hours.
- storage:** seed can be stored for 6 months.
- Management:** Fast growing in good conditions; it matures in a few years.
- Remarks:** Often evergreen and has attractive pink flowers which appear during the dry season. It provides excellent shade. In some countries the well-figured timber is valued for furniture and carvings. The leaves fold inward at night, in cool weather and in rain—hence the name "rain tree"—and during the day they unfold to a horizontal position.

