Katuk

Sauropus androgynus

Code: TREE-240F33E7B4756C4 **Location:** XIM University Campus **Local / Vernacular name:** ଚକ୍ରମନୁ

Botanical Details

Leaf habit: Evergreen Flowers / Fruits: small, flat, reddish-maroon flowers that hang underneath the leaf axils; fruit is a small, white or pale pink capsule resembling a miniature gooseberry. Native range: Native to South and Southeast Asia, including India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and China; widely cultivated in tropical regions worldwide, including the Pacific Islands and parts of Africa.

Uses & Importance

Ecological: Sauropus androgynus is a highly efficient understory species that plays a vital role in diversified agroforestry and "food forest" systems. Due to its tolerance for partial shade and its compact, upright growth habit, it is an ideal candidate for multi-tier farming where it protects the soil surface from direct sun and heavy rain impact. It serves as a significant biological resource for pollinators; its small, inconspicuous reddish flowers hidden beneath the leaves attract a variety of tiny wasps and bees. The plant is often used as a "living fence" or hedge, providing a dense green barrier that aids in wind reduction and maintains localized humidity. Its fast-growing nature and high biomass production make it an excellent source of organic green mulch, which, when pruned and left on the ground, enriches the soil with nitrogen and essential minerals. By integrating into garden edges and forest margins, it supports a healthy micro-ecosystem for beneficial insects and soil microorganisms, contributing to the overall resilience of the tropical landscape.

Medicinal: Often referred to as the "Multivitamin Plant," Katuk is one of the most nutrient-dense leafy greens available in the tropics. It is exceptionally high in protein, Vitamin K, Vitamin C, and iron. In traditional South Asian and Southeast Asian medicine, it is most famously used as a powerful galactagogue to stimulate and increase breast milk production in nursing mothers. The leaves are also used to treat various inflammatory conditions and fever; a juice made from the leaves is traditionally applied to treat earaches and skin eruptions. Modern pharmacological studies have highlighted its antioxidant and antimicrobial potential. However, it is a plant that requires balanced consumption ; while it provides immense nutritional value, excessive raw consumption over long periods has been linked in modern medical literature to respiratory issues, emphasizing the importance of traditional cooking methods (boiling or stir-frying) which neutralize certain alkaloids. When used correctly, it acts as a systemic tonic that boosts immunity, supports vision, and aids in the recovery of tissues after illness.

Cultural: In many Southeast Asian cultures, particularly in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Vietnam, Katuk is a symbol of domestic self-sufficiency and maternal health. It is a "homestead staple," almost always found in rural kitchen

gardens, representing the bridge between food and medicine. Culturally, it is associated with the care of newborns and mothers, often being the primary ingredient in traditional "confinement soups" served after childbirth. In India and Sri Lanka, it is valued for its hardiness and is often shared between neighbors as cuttings, symbolizing community and the sharing of health. The plant's deep green, symmetrical foliage is also appreciated for its aesthetic value, often used to create neat, edible boundaries in traditional tropical landscapes. Its ability to provide a continuous harvest throughout the year makes it a symbol of "the gift that keeps on giving," cementing its status as a vital heritage plant that ensures nutritional security for rural families across generations.

Location

GPS: 20.15860192, 85.76535449

Directions: https://www.google.com/maps/dir/?api=1&travelmode=walking&destination=20.15860192%2C85.76535449