

## *Schleichera oleosa* (Lour.) Oken.

### Systematic Position

Kingdom: Plantae

Phylum: Tracheophyta

Class: Magnoliopsida

Order : Sapindales

Family: Sapindaceae

Genus: *Schleichera*

Species: *Schleichera oleosa* (Lour.)  
Oken



**Popular names:** Kusum, Lac tree, Macassar oil tree, Ceylon oak, Puvathipuvam, Posuku, Puvam, Gyo, Kusumb.

**Family:** Sapindaceae

**Nature:** Tree

**Flowering time:** March to May

**Fruiting time:** June to July

**Plant distribution:** It is native of Indo-Malayan region. It is found widespread in Tropical Himalayas (Punjab to Nepal), India, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, Malaysia.

**Gardening notes:**

**1. Light:** It can grow in full sunlight.

**2. Water:** It requires moderate water supply but with a dry season.

**3. Propagation:** By seeds.

**Economic importance:**

1. Wood used for oil and sugar mills, rice pounders, pestles, axles and hubs and stocks of cart wheels, shafts, mortars, violin bows and agricultural implements. 2. Treated timber suitable for construction and cabinet-work and wagon building.
2. Timber is also a good fuel and makes excellent charcoal.
3. Raw fruits pickled; ripe ones eaten as such.
4. Young shoots eaten, also lopped for fodder.
5. Therapeutic uses includes lumbago, pruritus, malaria and leucorrhoea.
6. Bark is astringent and when mixed with oil is applied externally in skin eruptions.
7. One of the primary host tree of the lac insect and said to yield the finest quality of shellac.
8. Oil expressed from the seeds is used for treating rheumatism, headaches and skin diseases; also for cooking, soaps and illumination.

**Plant description:** A medium-sized to large deciduous or nearly evergreen tree reaching to 30-35 feet in height, often with a fluted bole and a dense, spreading crown.

**Root-** Tap root, branched; **Stem-** Aerial, erect, woody, branched, solid, cylindrical, bark- grey or pale brown, not very rough, pocked by small hollows where old bark has flaked off

**Leaf-** Compound, unipinnate, paripinnate, opposite, red when young and green when mature, exstipulate, 35-40 cm long, 20-25 cm wide, petiolate, petiole-

green, 4-5 cm long, leaflets- 3-5 pairs, elliptic to obovate, entire margins, obtuse apex, cuneate base, stalkless, blade 12-15 cm long, 5-7 cm wide, prominent midrib and veins, uncostate and reticulate venation.

**Inflorescence-** Panicle.

**Flower-** Yellow, minute, showy, in dense clusters, hypogynous, hermaphrodite, actinomorphic, ebracteate, unisexual, pedicellate, pedicel- minute, green, 0.5 cm long or nearly stalkless; Sepals – 5, gamosepalous, ends free, green, hairy surface, inferior, valvate aestivation; Petals- absent; Stamens – 7-9, free, longer than calyx, filaments- thin, yellow, 1 cm long, sparsely hairy, much reduced in female flowers; Carpel- one, ovary- ovoid, slightly 3-angular, about 1.3 mm long, style- rather thick, up to 1.5 mm long, reddish, pistil much reduced in male flower.

**Fruit-** Ovoid, ellipsoid to subglobular, berry, beaked at the tip, 1-2 seeds with pulp present inside, green when immature and brown when mature, hard skinned, pointed at tip, ripen fruits quickly falls to ground.

**Seed-** Rounded, brown, smooth, enclosed in edible pulp with a pleasant taste.

**Some close-up pictures of plant parts**



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