

*Butea monosperma* a magnificent tree is of Indian origin that belongs to the family Fabaceae. It is widely grown in tropical to subtropical climates. It is commonly called *palas*, *dhak*. This tree is found throughout the drier parts of India, in forests, open grasslands and wastelands. Leaves are shed during the dry season. At the beginning of the rainy season, the leafless tree flowers abundantly and is very conspicuous in the forest. Bright orange-red coloured flowers give an impression of monochromatic length colour that's the probable reason it's also called as "flame of the forest". At the end of the flowering period, new leaves develop, which are initially a pale bronze-tinged green in colour and turn completely green as they mature.

Origin: Asia (India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, etc)

Propagation: Through seeds or suckers

Soil type: It grows on a wide variety of soils including shallow, gravelly sites, black cotton soil, clay loams, and even saline or waterlogged soils. Seedlings thrive best on a rich loamy soil with pH 6-7 under high temperature and relative humidity.

Time of flowering: March to May

Use:

1. *Butea monosperma* is valuable as an ornamental tree because it produces a profusion of bright orange flowers
2. In India, the tree is an important host for the lac insect (*Laccifer lacca*), which produces shellac. Of all the lac trees, it yields the highest lac sticks per hectare. It is also used for control of soil erosion and farmers frequently use tree on field bunds. The young leaves are also used as fodder, eaten mainly by buffaloes. A red exudates is obtained from the bark, hardening into a gum known as 'Butea gum' or 'Bengal kino'. It can be used as a dye and as tannin. A bright yellow to deep orange-red dye, known as butein, prepared from the flowers is used especially for dyeing silk and sometimes for cotton. This dye is used by Hindus to mark the forehead.

References:

Orwa C, A Mutua, Kindt R , Jamnadass R, S Anthony. 2009 Agroforestry Database: A tree reference and selection guide version 4.0 (<http://www.worldagroforestry.org/sites/treedbs/treedatabases.asp>)s