

Botanical Name—Aegel marmelos

Bilva is a very good source of protein which is 5.12 per cent of the edible portion. Fresh half-ripe Bilva fruit is mildly astringent and is used for dysentery and diarrhea. The pulp may be eaten or the decoction administered. Bilva is said to cure without creating any tendency to constipation. Bilva leaves, fruits and root can be used as tonic and coolant with antibiotic properties

This tree is a larval foodplant for the following two Indian Swallowtail butterflies, the Lime Butterfly *Papilio demoleus* and the Common Mormon *Papilio polytes*.

Bilva is considered to be the best Saiigrahika and Dipaniya drug being vāta kapha hara (C.S.Su.25). Bilva Patra is however vātahara only (C.S.S.27). Suruta quoted Bilva as Rasāyana (S.S.Ci.27). Bilva is also called Siva Druma (Lord Siva's favourite tree) is held sacred by Hindus, the leaves being offered in prayers to Iva & Pārvasī. As Chopra aptly puts it, "No drug has been longer better known, more appreciated by the inhabitants of India than bael fruits". Different parts of the tree are used in ancient medicine viz, root (vātakaraj; stem (Hridroga hara or Jvara hara), leaves (Madhumeha hara), Apakva phala (sangrahi) and pakva phala (laxative).

Botanical Description – It is a medium to fairly large sized deciduous and glabrous tree up to 6-7.5 m high and 90-120 cm in girth. Branches armed with straight sharp, axillary 2.5 cm long spines. Bark soft, corky, light grey. Leaves alternate, trifoliate, occasionally digitately five foliate. Leaflets ovate or ovate lanceolate, crenate, acuminate, lateral sessile, terminal long petioled. Flowers large, greenish white, sweet scented in short axillary panicles. Fruits glabrous, grey or yellow, rind woody. Seeds- numerous, oblong, compressed, embedded in sacs covered with thick orange coloured sweet pulp. Fruit 2 1/2 to 3 1/4 inches in diameter, globular or ovoid in shape, colour greyish brown, outside surface hard and nearly smooth. Rind about 1/8 inch thick and adherent to a light red pulp, in which are ten to fifteen cells, each containing several woolly seeds. It has a faint aromatic odour and mucilaginous taste

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