

**LOCAL NAMES**

Burmese (taung-tangyi); English (creek Premna); Hindi (takli); Indonesian (singkil alas, seungit, babon); Malay (pokok buru hantu, buas-buas); Tamil (pay minnay, munnai, mooney do); Thai (sam pre nga bai, man kai, akkhe thawan thale)

**BOTANIC DESCRIPTION**

*Premna serratifolia* is a deciduous, spreading shrub or small tree to about 12 m high, erect or rarely climbing. Branchlets with elliptic yellowish lenticels, densely pubescent when young.

Leaves opposite, shiny, light green, oval to elliptical, 5-18 cm long. Petiole 0.3-5 cm, leafblade papery, subglabrous or pubescent only along veins, margin entire, apex acute to rarely acuminate or obtuse.

Flowers numerous, small, greenish white in dense, terminal panicles about 10-20 cm across.

Fruits many, small, smooth and globose, 2-4 mm in diameter, fleshy and dark blue to black when mature.

**BIOLOGY**

Flowering from April to October, and in other places from January to June.

**ECOLOGY**

A delightful coastal tree, on sandy seashores and peat swamp forests; on mountain slopes and along streams or secondary forest, fallow areas, and thickets, up to 800 m altitude; common to occasional in garden areas and home gardens.

**BIOPHYSICAL LIMITS**

Altitude: 100-800 m

Temperature: 21-31° C

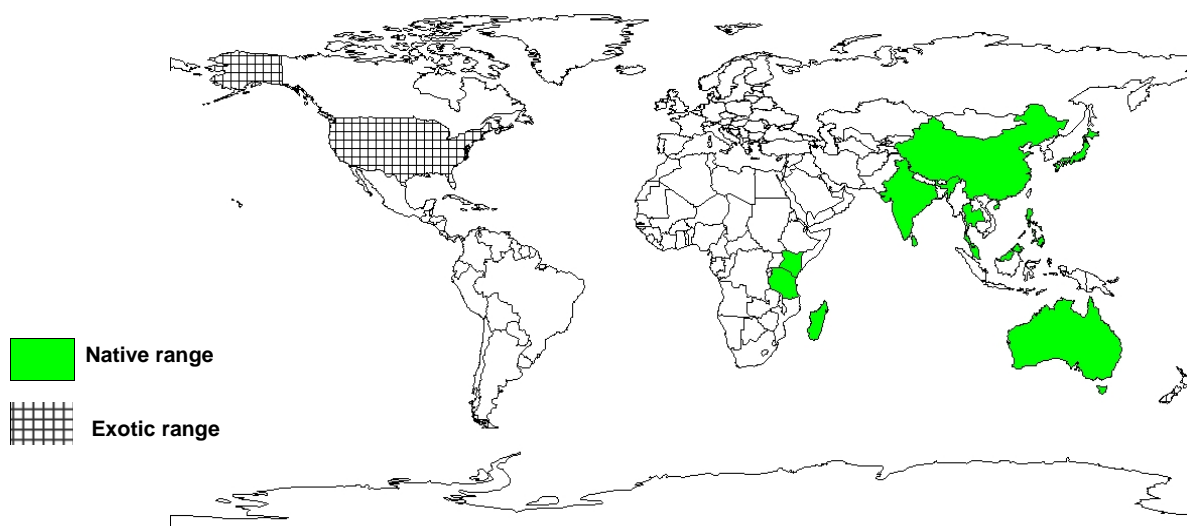
Rainfall: mean annual 1890 mm

Soil type: prefers coastal beach sandy soil

**DOCUMENTED SPECIES DISTRIBUTION**

Native: Australia, China, India, Japan, Kenya, Kiribati, Madagascar, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Province of China, Tanzania, Thailand

Exotic: New Zealand, US



The map above shows countries where the species has been planted. It does neither suggest that the species can be planted in every ecological zone within that country, nor that the species can not be planted in other countries than those depicted. Since some tree species are invasive, you need to follow biosafety procedures that apply to your planting site.

**PRODUCTS**

**Food:** leaves and tender shoots cooked and eaten as greens. The boiled leaves are eaten with fish and by women to stimulate milk production; seeds eaten by children in Tuvalu; ripe fruit formerly eaten with yams, and a food of pigeons and fruit bats in Vanuatu.

**Timber:** The wood *Premna* is hard and fairly strong to strong and is used for general construction, house building (mainly as posts), household implements and paddles; also suitable for furniture. In India it is generally used for turning, carving, weaving shuttles and bobbins. The nicely figured root wood has also been used for knife handles; used to make canoe nails in New Guinea, and to make specialized, large fish-hooks in Kiribati. Straight saplings or branches used as fishing rods. The short and often fluted bole strongly diminishes the value of *Premna* as a timber.

**Fuel:** used as firewood and for making fire by friction in Micronesia; best firewood to cook pandanus in earthen ovens in Nauru

**Medicine:** bark, leaves, and fruit used medicinally for a wide range of maladies throughout Melanesia, Polynesia, and Micronesia; the leaves are used to cure "weakness of limbs," and the leaves and leaf sap are used to alleviate headache. Used externally as poultice for sores and wounds. Aborigines used this plant to treat the stings of Stonefish and Stingray as well as spear wounds.

**Tannin or dyestuff:** root provides dye in Tuvalu

**Essential oils:** leaves and roots used to perfume coconut oil in Tuvalu, Kiribati, and Nauru; flowers used in coconut oil for hair in Samoa.

**SERVICES**

**Ornamental:** *P. serratifolia* is planted as an emblem of the god Avaro in Tahiti; a symbol of love, affection, beauty, goodness, pleasure, and virtue in Ulithi; the huge leaves used in ceremonial dress in New Guinea and worn in ear slits in Tuvalu; flowers used in garlands in Nauru and Puluwat.

**Boundary or barrier:** *P. serratifolia* is occasionally grown as living fence or hedge around gardens, commonly in Fiji.

**Premna serratifolia**

L.

Verbenaceae

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**PESTS AND DISEASES**

Common pest is the Papaya fruit fly (*Bactrocera papayae*).

**FURTHER READING**

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