

Red Cotton Tree Flower

The Red Cotton Tree Flower, with a scientific name of *Bombax ceiba*, commonly known as Cotton Tree, is also named Hero Tree, Panzhihua, Bonfire Tree. The *Bombax ceiba* is a deciduous tree that grows in tropical and subtropical regions. It is often planted along both sides of the street and used in urban landscaping. In Macao, it is very common to find them in parks, gardens and green belts. Among them, there are some century-old trees, distributed in places such as Luís de Camões Park, Lou Lim Ioc Park, Flora Park and A-Ma Temple and so on.

The *Bombax ceiba* is tall and straight, changes its appearance along with the seasons. In autumn, the withered leaves fall gracefully with wind. In winter, the cold wind sobs through its bare and dry branches. In spring, when its flowers bloom, the bright red tree is outstanding in the forest. In early summer, it produces capsules which, when ripe, contain white fibres like snow. And in midsummer, its richer green leaves are giving pleasant shade on sweltering days. Year after year, the *Bombax ceiba* presents its graceful uniqueness in the changing seasons. Among them, the most amazing moment is the spring when the *Bombax ceiba* in full blossom, attracting bees and birds and announcing the arrival of spring. Its valiant bearing and unprecedented magnificence set itself apart from most of its rivals.

The Red Cotton Tree Flower is large and beautiful, growing in the singleton manner on top of the branch at the leaf axil. Its brown calyx is cup-shaped, with 5 obovate petals, which are usually in red, sometimes in orange-red, and rare in yellow. The petals are slightly curled when they bloom, with many stamens distributed in outer and inner rings. And the pistil is higher than the stamens, with 5-lobed at the stigma apex.

The beauty of the Red Cotton Tree Flower and its nectar attract birds such as Japanese White-eye (*Zosterops japonicus*), Light-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus sinensis*), Eurasian Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Crested Myna (*Acridotheres cristatellus*), etc. And bees are also attracted to help spreading the pollen. Sun-dried Red Cotton Tree Flower can be used as medicine, which is effective in clearing heat, dampening, and detoxifying. It is also one of the raw materials of the famous herbal tea in Guangdong - the five-flower tea. The root and the bark of the tree can be used medicinally; its cotton wool can be used as a filler for pillows or wadding; the tree trunks can be used as materials; and the seeds can be used as lubricating oil or making soap. It can be said that the tree is a totally treasure!

The delicate beauty and elegant posture of the Red Cotton Tree Flower have made it an object of singings and praises from ancient and modern literati. Widely-recited poems and famous verses, and works such as paintings and photography are very popular.

This “Red Cotton Tree Flower” stamp issued has bright and gorgeous colours, as well as the outstanding solid red colour. Let us savor the beauty of the Red Cotton Tree Flower from the stamp.

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