

Bombacaceae C.S. Kunth

Bombax Family

The Bombacaceae is also known as the Kapok Family. The Bombacaceae is a dicotyledonous family consisting of 25 to 30 genera containing 180 to 200 species of subtropical to tropical plants. Most members are medium to large trees, although a few are small trees or large shrubs. Leaves are usually alternate, stipulate, and sometimes simple, but more commonly palmately compound. Many species have swollen trunks that are thought to function as water storage tissues. Flowers often occur when drought or cold induce leaf abscission. Flowers are usually in short few-flowered cymes or sometimes solitary. The large showy perfect flowers often exhibit a distended pistil, have five petals which tend to be fused at the bases into a funnel-shaped throat, and a superior ovary. Most frequently, fruits are large woody to semi-woody capsules containing numerous seeds covered by long floss-like or silky white fibers. The only genus of consequence in our region is *Ceiba*, but *Adansonia*, *Bombax*, and *Chorisa* are important trees in many tropical portions of the world, particularly those with dry climates. Several species lay claim to important roles in the beliefs of indigenous people in Africa, India, and Australia. The family Bombacaceae is considered by some authorities to be included in the larger Malvaceae family.

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