

# Plumeria: world's most beloved garden plant

There are about 9 species of plumerias and all of them originated from Mexico and other regions of Central America, says **N.CHANDRAMOHAN REDDY**



**EASILY ADAPTABLE:** Plumerias are ideal for planting in home gardens, water gardens, patios, courtyards, planter boxes, roof-top gardens, balconies, as well as in groups or in a bonsai form.

**P**lumeria flowers with their beautiful colours and fragrance symbolise natural beauty!

Plumeria, which is otherwise known as Frangipani, Pagoda tree, Temple tree and West Indian Jasmine is the world's most beloved garden plant. It is a large shrub or a tree that can be grown in tropical and sub-tropical climates.

There are about nine species of Plumerias and all of them originated from Mexico and other regions of Central America. The popular Plumeria species are *Plumeria rubra*, *Plumeria obtusa*, *Plumeria pudica* and *Plumeria alba*.

Many cultivated varieties have been developed in the horticulture trade and now more than 1,000 flower colours are available in the international market.

Plumerias come in all colours of the rainbow - from pure white to deep red, from pale pink to butter lemon to the vibrant shades of yellows, golds, oranges, peach, mango, lilac, blood red and so on.

They also come in bi-colours and tri-colours with striped petals. And now there are many varieties developed with various shades of leaf variegations. Petal shapes also vary from thick, over-

lapping scalloped petals to thin, elongated ones.

The fragrances of Plumeria flowers are diverse - ranging from coconut to jasmine, including citrus, rose, honeysuckle, raspberry, spice, apricot, peach etc. Each and every Frangipani variety has unique fragrance!

The flowers are used for making scents and perfumes.

Fresh flowers of Plumerias are scattered in pools and bowls for decoration. Plumerias are slow growing with swollen, succulent limbs with milky latex (The latex is not deadly except when taken in large quantities). The large, thick leaves are whorled around the tips of woody branches.

#### Waxy petals

All the varieties are prolific bloomers and flowers bloom like bouquets at the tips of branches.

Each flower is made of five waxy petals. Flowers secrete no nectar but are pollinated by moths that are attracted by the fragrance.

Mature frangipanis can grow to around 10 metres high and 7 metres wide. There are both evergreen and deciduous varieties of Plumerias and the

deciduous ones will shed their leaves during winter.

Plumerias thrive with a little maintenance, are easy to propagate and look magnificent with large clusters of sweet-scented flowers almost throughout the year and hence make excellent garden plants.

They are ideal for planting in home gardens, water gardens, patios, courtyards, planter boxes, roof-top gardens, balconies, as well as in groups, for privacy screen, for hedge, as specimen plants, beside a wall or in a bonsai form.

#### Maintenance

Plumerias prefer bright sunlight and moderate humidity for optimum growth and require at least 6 to 7 hours of direct sun every day. No special care is required in the peak summer also. They grow well in light soils having good drainage but struggle in clay soils, where it is hard for water to drain away.

For the old container plants, if their roots have filled the container, the plants to be repotted in spring to a slightly bigger pot.

Top-dressing is needed every year by removing the top 2 to 3 inches of soil in the pot and replacing it with fresh soil

mixed with manure.

#### Watering

Plumerias require profuse watering but the top soil shall be dried out before the next watering. On the onset of winter the frequency of watering shall be reduced and totally stopped after all the leaves are shed in the deciduous varieties and resumed in the spring as new growth begins.

#### Feeding

Plumerias will flower bigger and better, with the application of fertilizers during spring and summer. They should

be fed with a high nitrogen fertilizer during spring when growth begins. To encourage the blooms, switch to phosphorous fertilizer in 2 to 3 doses from April to September.

#### Pruning

The size of the plant can be controlled by pruning, and by doing so more branching out and thereby more blooming occurs. Pruning operation can be done in late winter or early spring. While pruning, make a sharp and slant cut just above node. Thinning out about 20 per cent of the canopy of the mature plant is good to do every few

years; it opens up the branches, allows light in and reduces stem rot.

#### Pests and diseases

Plumerias are very hardy and have very few insect or disease problems. During wet, cool weather frangipanis can be at risk of root / stem rot, caused by fungus. To reduce the risk, remove the spongy branches, reduce watering and spray fungicide.

In cool and moist regions Plumerias are also susceptible to scale (insect) and rust (fungus) problems, which can be solved with minor doses of insecticide and fungicide sprays.

#### Propagation

Propagation of Plumerias is easier when compared to many garden plants. Take about one foot long stem tip cuttings in spring, allow them to dry for 4-5 days, and plant them in potting medium.

The cuttings will start rooting in 15-20 days. They can also be propagated through layering, grafting and from seeds.

(The author is a forest officer and can be contacted at 'nchandramohanreddy@gmail.com')

#### Plumeria is named after 'Charles Plumier', 18th century French botanist and traveller.

The name, Frangipani, comes from the 16th century Italian nobleman, 'Marquis Frangipani', who created a perfume used to scent gloves. Later when the Plumeria flowers were popularised, their fragrance reminded people of the scented gloves, and so the flower was called 'Frangipani'. Another version says that the name, Frangipani, is from the French 'Frangipane' a type of recipe, which reminds the scent of Plumeria.

#### Where to buy them?

There are more than 1,000 colours of Plumeria varieties available in Thailand. In India most of the nurseries sell different varieties but to have good collection, one should contact big nurseries in Mumbai, Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Pondicherry, Thiruvananthapuram.

## Pocket-friendly option

Elegant and sturdy, cane furniture continues to attract urban buyers who want something extra and unique for their home, writes **SYEDA FARIDA**

**T**hink furniture and cane seems to remain the ever-green option. Durable, sturdy, almost zero maintenance, ethnic and easy to lug along wicker beds, cane sofa sets and home theatre stands can be the right option to do up the house in one tone.

Today owing to its relatively inexpensive cost, crafting furniture for the entire house in cane - from conservatory furniture - garden and living room, to dining hall and bar cabinet - is a pocket-friendly proposition. Add to these a few cane show pieces such as miniature rocking chairs, baskets and cane bicycles, as also lamp shades and wall frames to complete the picture.

"Furniture for the entire house - sofa sets, dining table, mirror frames, television stand, racks, side table and cots - can be made for Rs. 80,000 onwards. The wedding wardrobe and home furniture gift sets in cane are popular," says Ashfaq Ahmed of Bombay Cane Furniture Works at Lakdikapul.

When compared to wooden or leather furniture, cane scores on the cost factor.

While a designer no frills leather rocking chair can cost Rs. 15,000 onwards, a humble variant in cane comes for Rs. 2,000 and is equally snug. Imported cane comes for a little extra though.

#### Durability

The other USP of cane is its durability. The cane furniture lasts for 10-15 years with a varnish or paint once every three years.

Cane sofas are ideal for the sun rooms and as garden furniture. Glass-topped centre tables in hand woven wicker paired with lightweight lounge chairs can add extra sparkle to any lawn.

"Wicker furniture is the new trend for sit outs. Apart from traditional wooden shades one can now find



**AFFORDABLE:** Compared to wooden furniture, cane scores on the cost factor. -PHOTO: G. KRISHNASWAMY.

wicker furniture in white and other shades," says city based architect Amita Raj, ARDeS Architects and Designs.

Rattan furniture as also wicker furniture crafted made using cane can also take other hues apart from the varnish. Greys, whites and cream are few muted colours that are popular for cane furniture across the world.

"Cane furniture when used with ambient lighting and warm shades for the walls offer a nice cosy look for small spaces.

They give a very ethnic look when compared to linear minimalist modular and wooden furniture," says city based architect Amita Raj, ARDeS Architects and Designs.

#### Flexibility

Also, unlike wood furniture, cane provides flexibility to craft designs and

shapes of one's choice. Apart from traditional patterns, the international catalogues feature contemporary designs that can be made to order by city based cane furniture manufacturers.

As for the cane, apart from domestic wicker, cane Andamans, Malaysia and Indonesia can also be imported for a premium.

The native cane from Assam and Bareilly is equally sturdy. Choosing good product and differentiating from bamboo is not difficult. "Bamboo is hollow while cane has a solid core. When looking for the cane, the gauge and sturdiness are to be checked," says Ashfaq.

Ethnic, elegant and earthy, cane continues to attract urban buyers who want something extra and unique for their homes. And it is a boon for the families on the move.

## Insight into first time buyers' psyche

**W**hat are the parameters that a first time property buyer usually goes by in his effort to acquire a home?

A study conducted by the real estate website, Makaan.com threw up interesting aspects about the choices that first time buyers prefer to make these days.

According to the 'First Home Survey', the first time home buyers seems to be more in favour of maximum discount that comes with Down Payment (DP) plan than Construction Linked Plan (CLP) which provides protection against construction and other delays. Contrary to popular perception on CLP being the more preferred choice, the research had 41 per cent preferring the down payment option.

Going by these findings, the urge for a discount appears to be stronger than the security of a timely possession among the first time home buyers. The DP is followed by Flexi Plan, essentially a mix of Time Linked Plan (TLP) and CLP and one that offers greater

discount compared with the CLP.

In its observation, the website describes it to be an important insight into the buying psyche but limited to first time home buyers only. "For people buying their second home or someone who has experienced a delay in possession, the preference will be for a CLP," it says. It is obvious that home buyers will realise their DP advantage only if their projects are handed over on time while a considerable delay will end up eroding that advantage.

#### Connectivity

Among other parameters, connectivity has emerged as more preferred factor than location, which usually is considered as an important consideration. The preference for connectivity over location is not by choice, argues Makaan.com adding that home buyers are unable to find their dream adobe closer to their preferred location in their limited budget and are forced to compromise with an

area 15 to 20 kms away from the main city.

The research which had a participation of more than 3,953 first time home buyers from across the country also documented 65 per cent preferring flats/apartments, followed by independent houses or villas which were favoured by 21 per cent of the respondents.

The website also notes that the tendency among young generation to purchase a home at an early stage of life is going to increase in the coming years. "With easy availability of finance and dual earning, the average age of a first time home buyers is likely to reduce from early 30s to late 20s in next four to six years," it says.

Also, affordable housing i.e., housing below Rs.40 lakh continues to be a preference for most. Around 42 per cent of respondents chose a budget between Rs.20 to Rs.40 lakh and 38 per cent preferring a budget of less than Rs.20 lakh.

T. LALITH SINGH

## Rooftop solar power plant

**T**he rooftop solar specialists, Solid Sun-Shade Solutions also reduce electricity bills and helps to use the roof as an Open Air Café, Green meeting place etc. "The Green rooftop on ones enterprise is an excellent way to become self sustainable," she says.

A rooftop solar power plant works by generating electricity from the photovoltaic modules put up on the roof and feeds it to the building for its internal consumption.

A 100KW rooftop solar power plant covers 1,500 square meters of roof area reducing the peak electricity demand on power grid and DG sets while simultaneously improving local air quality. When fully powered, the solar system is capable of generating approximately 1.5 lakh units every year, equivalent to lighting 1,500 rural homes and reduces 10,000 tonnes of Greenhouse gas emissions over the life of the solar plant, the release added.

According to Ms. Shubhra Mohanka, Director, Solid Solar by Gautam Polymers, apart from helping in generating power on the

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