

## Samanea saman – Monkey Pod Tree

Samanea saman, commonly known as the Monkey pod or Rain Tree is a stunning large shade tree from tropical America, with large, dome-shaped canopy. It is native to the Central American jungles where it will grow to well over 30m in height with a spread of perhaps 50m. The attractive wood is crafted into platters and bowls that are commonly marketed in Hawaii. The pods have a sweet, sticky brown pulp, and are fed to cattle in Central America.

A lofty canopied tree with a large symmetrical crown, it gets its name from the fernlike leaflets close up at night, permitting rain to fall through to the grass beneath. The long black pods and the leaves are used for fodder. It produces beautiful glowing pink flowers followed by attractive green and black pods that contain a sweet pulp that is eaten by monkeys in its jungle habitat, it may bloom sporadically throughout the year but Summer is its primary blooming time.

This species is very tolerant of heavy pruning and can be maintained at any desired height by judicious pruning. It is not often realised that this magnificent tree can be raised inside in containers and makes a wonderful Bonsai plant.

This one likes full sun to partial shade in good deep rich soil. It is a tropical and is not frost tolerant but as with other rain forest species it can grow indoors or on a verandah or patio until too large.

### Propagation

Samanea is a member of the Mimosifoliae and seed germinates readily after soaking overnight in initially hot (almost boiling) water.

Sow seed lengthwise in any good medium potting or propagation mix. Cover the seed lightly and water in well and keep the mixture moist but not damp. Place the seed tray in a warm dark place – being a tropical it likes warmth to germinate – at least 18°C as a minimum and germination will be faster and more even if temperatures can be maintained for much of the time at 22°C. Germination in 14 to 28 days.

Prick the individual seedlings into tubes as soon as they are large enough to handle. Pot on as needed. Protect against frost, snail and slugs.