

The red cotton tree (*Bombax ceiba*) is a medium- to large-sized tropical tree that usually grows to an average of 20-25 meters, with old trees up to 60 meters in wet tropical weather. It has a straight tall trunk buttressed at base that bears conical spines to deter animal attacks. It produces a capsule which, when ripe, contains white fibres, like cotton, which has been used as a substitute for cotton (hence its common name). Crimson red flowers with five petals appear in the spring before the new foliage and are one reason that the tree is widely planted. Trunk, very straight, bole up to 35 m tall, usually cylindrical, 2-3 m in diameter, usually with large plank-like buttresses up to 3 m high extending 1-2 m from the bole and with more or less horizontal main branches and often bracketed below to the stem. Branches usually in whorls of 3. The trunk and many of the larger branches are often crowded with large conical thorns 1-1.5 cm long, at least when young, bark smooth pale grey, young branches glabrous or pubescent. Its leaves are deciduous in winter.