

GINKGO

SCIENTIFIC NAME: GINKGO BILOBA



SPECIES OVERVIEW

Ginkgo biloba, commonly referred to as ginkgo, are long-lived deciduous trees that have survived on Earth for millions of years, with identified fossil records dating back more than 200 million years. The origin of this tree species can be traced back to the Zhejiang province of eastern China, with this species range now extending into Japan and Korea. Ginkgo's are the sole surviving species of an ancient lineage of gymnosperms (a plant species with seeds unprotected by fruit or ovary, which includes conifers, cycads, and ginkgos'). Due to logging and wood harvesting, ginkgo is currently listed as *Endangered* on the IUCN Red List, meaning they are at risk of becoming extinct.

Ginkgo trees have unique fan-shaped leaves that set them apart from other tree species. These leaves have a thick, waxy coating that protects them from numerous environmental stressors, such as cold weather, and unfavorable atmospheric conditions. Ginkgos are dioecious, meaning they have one tree producing pollen and one producing fleshy seeds. Those fleshy seeds contain a thin-layer nut roughly 2 cm in diameter.

CULTURAL VALUE

The earliest historical record of ginkgo can be linked back to 11th-century poems during the Song Dynasty (AD 960 to 1279); however, it is possible ginkgo seeds were collected thousands of years before these records. Ginkgo seeds are still used for sweet and savory dishes in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese cuisines.

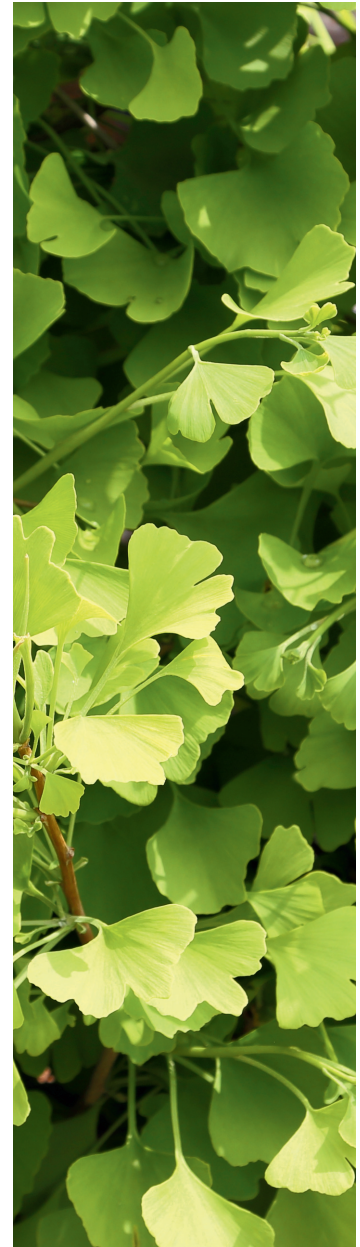


Ginkgo trees are a symbol of longevity in many cultures. For instance, in Japan, this species of tree are often planted near temples and shrines as a symbol of hope and resilience. Across China, ginkgos can often be found in temple gardens

The wood from ginkgo trees finds purpose in being carved into religious statues, while living-aged ginkgo trees often bear inscriptions or ribbons, serving as poignant expressions of the hopes and prayers held by local communities.

Beyond symbolism, ginkgo trees also have practical uses, with their leaves and seeds being utilized in traditional medicine and cuisine. Seeds, free of their fleshy coating, and freshly dried leaves contain large numbers of active compounds that have been used to aid in treating blood disorders and are renowned for their potential cognitive benefits. Ginkgo extract has been highly desired in Western medicine in recent decades, where herbal medicines are growing in demand.

As urban landmarks, ginkgo trees line streets and parks, serving as living witnesses to the passage of time and linking the contemporary world with ancient traditions. Within the Edmonton region you can find an ornamental ginkgo tree located on the University of Alberta campus.



REFERENCES

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