

Southern silky oak

Grevillea robusta



Silky Oak scientifically known as *Grevillea robusta* is an agroforestry, timber, flowering and honey tree in the Proteaceae (Protea family). The plant is native to coastal eastern Australia from the Clarence River, New South Wales, to Maryborough, Queensland, and is now naturalized in Hawaii and southern Florida. Its natural range limited to pockets of subtropical forest on the east coast of the continent. **Australian silky-oak, he oak, she-oak, silk oak, silky oak, silver oak, southern silky-oak, Fernleaf, Golden pine, silk-oak grevillea, grevillea and river oak** are some of the well-known common names of the plant. The genus name *Grevillea* is named after Charles Francis Greville (1749 – 1809) who helped to establish a society now called the Royal Horticultural Society. The species epithet *robusta* means large or strong in Latin and it refers to this species' large growth form. The common name Silky Oak is a reference to the wood which is similar to oak, but has a silk-like texture after being split.

The tree is often cultivated in the tropics for timber and as a windbreak. It is an ornamental plant, valued particularly for its attractive fern-like foliage and brilliant orange floral display. It is often grown in gardens and as a street tree. The tree flowers freely in subtropical areas, but only poorly in the lowland tropics.

Traditional uses and benefits of Silk oak

- In Kenya, natives of the Kakamega Forest use the plant to treat sore throats, earache, chest problems, flu and toothache.
- In North Garo Hills, Meghalaya, NE India, bark and leaves used for headaches and dizziness.



Culinary Uses

- The flowers are one of the richest sources of nectar.
- This can be sucked directly from the flowers, shaken into a bowl or washed out in a small quantity of water.
- The nectar falls in showers when the flowers are shaken.

Other Facts

- The plant yields small quantities of a gum resin.
- Leaves consist of rutin, though quantities are not specified.

- Intense yellow and green dyes are obtained from the leaves.
- This tree is one of the most important re-afforestation trees in Nepal.
- It is sometimes used as a rootstock for the more susceptible species.
- Wood is used for paneling, joinery, cabinet making etc.
- It is considered a good fuel.
- The leaves are also used as mulch.
- It is very popular in agroforestry systems and often planted to provide shade for
 - tea and coffee plantations.
- Trees usually begin to flower at about 10 years.
- There are reported to be 64,000 to 154,000 seeds per kilogram (29,000 to 70,000/lb.).
- It is regarded as a weed in parts of New South Wales and Victoria, as invasive in Hawaii and as an invader in South Africa.
- Silk oak timber was extensively used for external window joinery, as it is resistant to wood rot.
- It has been used in the manufacture of furniture, cabinetry, and fences.
- In the UK, Silk oak has gained the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit.
- It is grown in plantations in South Africa, and can also be grown alongside maize in agroforestry systems.
- Wood is used in making railroad ties, plywood, air-freight cases and furniture, parquetry, turnery, boat building, interior trim, cabinet work, parquet flooring, boxes, toys and novelties.
- The golden flowers are attractive to bees, making it an important honey plant.

