

Enterolobium cyclocarpum

Role In Nature

Enterolobium cyclocarpum is prized for its wide canopy, offering shade in pastures, coffee plantations, and urban areas. Its nutritious seed pods serve as valuable livestock feed, especially in dry seasons. As a legume, it also fixes atmospheric nitrogen, enhancing soil fertility and supporting plant growth.

Cultural Significance

Enterolobium cyclocarpum has been fundamental to the development of rural cultures in Central America since pre-Columbian times. *E. cyclocarpum* is the national tree of Costa Rica, where it is prized for the shade it provides from the intense tropical sun. The seeds of *Enterolobium cyclocarpum* are sometimes extracted from the pods, ground into flour and eaten.

Medicinal Benefits

- In Mexican folk medicine, the sap of *Enterolobium cyclocarpum* is believed to help treat influenza and bronchitis.
- The astringent properties of the tree's green fruit are used to treat diarrhea.
- Bark extracts are traditionally used against colds and bronchitis.
- The wood and bark contain tannins, which have astringent properties, but the specific compounds and effective doses remain unclear.

Did You Know?

The most distinctive feature of *Enterolobium cyclocarpum* is its large, curled seed pods that resemble human or monkey ears, giving rise to many of its common names. The pods can grow up to 75 cm long and are dark brown when mature, splitting open to release numerous winged seeds. *Enterolobium cyclocarpum* has a unique characteristic of natural populations exhibiting variation in flower color, ranging from white to bright yellow. This color variation within the same species is relatively uncommon.