

Seashore Trees

Mangrove

Rhizophora mangle
Black, white and red mangroves are common species along our tropical shores. The red shown here, extends shorelines or creates islands with its arching stilt roots.



Seagrape

Cocoloba uvifera
This familiar shoreline tree is easy to identify by its large round leathery leaves. It bears clusters of green, ripening to purple, fruits that are edible.



Maho*

Thespesia populnea
This coastal tree, for which Maho Bay was named, is characterized by large bell-shaped flowers that turn from pale yellow to purple. It has heart shaped leaves and green seed pods that turn brown.



Manchineel

Hippomane mancinella
This is a very poisonous tree with shiny, small oval leaves. It can grow to 40 ft. in height, and bears small crabapple-sized fruits that are highly toxic. The tree's white sap is also very harmful.



Fruit Trees

Sugar Apple

Annona squamosa
A small deciduous tree attaining 10-20 ft. in height with irregular spreading branches. Well known for its sweet edible fruit, resembling hand grenades in appearance.



Mango*

Mangifera indica
An excellent hardy shade tree with lance shaped leaves and bearing one of the finest tropical fruits. One of many introduced species. Its sap may cause dermatitis.



Genip*

Melicococcus bijugatus
This large deciduous tree has gray blotchy bark and dark green leaves. The clustered edible fruits are quarter sized with green leathery skin, a single large seed and tart pulpy fruit.



Some common trees within the Park are non-native or naturalized (exotic*), and may be displacing native (indigenous) flora and fauna. Virgin Islands National Park is implementing a management program to control the invasive exotics, in order to protect the native trees.

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Virgin Islands National Park

Common Trees of Virgin Islands National Park

Ginger Thomas*

Tecoma stans



Ginger Thomas (also yellow cedar or yellow elder) is a nonnative tree or shrub, that produces the official flower of the US Virgin Islands. It is found along roadsides with bright yellow, trumpet shaped flowers, and long, narrow seed pods. Ginger Thomas usually blooms during extended rainy periods.

This is a guide to the most commonly found trees in Virgin Islands National Park. The majority of these trees can be seen at popular sites in the park such as Trunk Bay, Annaberg, or along hiking trails. The Park is home to over 400 tree species. Many of these have several names due to the complex cultural heritage of the island.



Teyer Palm

Coccothrinax alta

The only remaining native palm. Used in traditional basketry, fish traps, brooms and roof thatching. These trees prefer moist habitats and grow with tall slender trunks.



Calabash

Crescentia cujete

A distinctive tree with leaves growing directly off the main branches. The fruit can grow to basketball size, and when dried, used as gourds, rattles or ornamental bowls.



Noni / starvation fruit

Morinda citrifolia

Also: Painkiller plant
It can be seen at the entrance to Trunk Bay. Identifiable by large, oval leaves and irregularly shaped, whitish fruit, palatable to animals and birds only, also used in modern, alternative medicine.



Flamboyant *

Delonix regia

Also: Royal Poinciana

A large tree with 2 foot long "feathery" leaves and a brilliant spreading crown of blood-orange flowers, blooming twice a year. Its long woody "shak shak" seed pods used in calypso and local scratchband music.



Gumbo Limbo

Bursera Simaruba

Also: Turpentine or Tourist Tree. Identify this dry forest tree by its peeling red bark (or skin!). The leaves and sap smell like turpentine and have many medicinal properties.



Lignum Vitae

Guaiacum officinale

A slow growing evergreen with small orange seedpods. It blooms twice a year with pale blue flowers. It has an extremely dense wood that will sink in water and was used for ball bearings.



Kapok *

Ceiba pentandra

Also: Silk Cotton Tree. Can be found on the Reef bay trail with huge buttressing roots. Its seed pods release fluffy silky material used for stuffing mattress cushions and life jackets. Indigenous people carved canoes and drums from the trunk.



Bay Rum

Pimenta racemosa

A smooth barked tree with dark green, shiny fragrant leaves. The leaves are used medicinally and the oil from the leaves for aftershave. Easily seen around the Cinnamon Bay ruins, it is still locally used for cooking, however it should not be confused with the more widely used laurel bay leaf.



Frangipani

Plumeria alba

This attractive native tree with milky sap, is easily distinguished by its long narrow lance-shaped leaves and clusters of fragrant waxy, white flowers. It grows in dry areas, and is often defeated by a moth caterpillar.



Tamarind *

Tamarindus indica

Large trees with feathery leaves are often found in roadways and trails. They bear pulpy bean shaped seed pods. The fruit is used to make can-dies, juices or eaten raw. It is a tasty ingredient in Worcester-shire sauce.



Monkey No Climb*

Hura crepitans

Easily identifiable by its bark, which is covered with dense sharp thorns. Miniature pumpkin shaped seed pods were once used as receptacles for sand used to blot ink on a writing quill, hence the nickname Sandbox tree.