

# Rambutan tree spotted in Maharashtra for the 1st time

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Kolhapur: A species indigenous to Malaysia and Indonesia has been found for the first time in Maharashtra at Kolhapur district.

It is, therefore, the first scientific record of the tree in the state said renowned botanist Dr Madhukar Bachulkar. Environment lover Dr Subhash Athale spotted it near Andur dam in Gaganbawda tehsil.

Athale was on a nature tour, when he saw an unknown tree laden with fruits in a resort near Andur dam on the Kolhapur—Gaganbawda road. He took photos of the tree and sent it to senior plant expert Bachulkar. When the botanist visited the spot in person, he recognised the tree as a Rambutan, a green that he had seen earlier at a botanical garden in Kerala a few years ago.

Bachulkar said, “The scientific name of the exotic and evergreen Rambutan tree is ‘Nephelium lappacium’. It is a member of the ‘Sapindaceae’ ie family of rhizomes and the genus of litchi fruit..”

Rambutan is a Malaysian word. The tree got its name from the small tufted hair on the fruit which is used to make a variety of drinks from ‘gara’. Its bark, roots and leaves are used in traditional medicines and the leaves are also used to make dyes. The trees are widely cultivated for their fruits in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Singapore, and, to some extent, Kerala in India.