

BANYAN TREE

A banyan is a kind of fig. It usually starts life by growing on another plant as an epiphyte. Its seeds germinate in the cracks and crevices on a host tree, or on other structures like buildings and bridges.

Banyan usually means "*Ficus benghalensis*". It is the national tree of the Republic of India and of Bangladesh respectively. However the term actually includes all figs which share their epiphytic life cycle. They are put in the subgenus *Urostigma*. The seeds of banyans are dispersed by fruit eating birds. The seeds germinate and send down roots towards the ground. These roots may envelop part of the host tree or building structure, from which they get the casual name of strangler fig.