



# GINKGO TREE (GINKGO BILOBA)

## TREE FACTS

The ginkgo tree is referred to as a **“living fossil,”** because it is **one of the world’s oldest species still living today.** It’s the only remaining member of the order Ginkgoales in the family **GINKGOACEAE.** Both ornamental and medicinal, its roots go back to ancient history in China, where Buddhist monks cultivated the tree. Its shape is pyramidal, and its columnar trunk has few branches with gray and cork-like textured bark. **It’s most recognizable by its fan-shaped leathery leaves** that turn from bright green to bright yellow in the fall. Its fertilized ovules develop into silvery-yellow plum-like seeds that are considered edible when roasted. The **trees are dioecious,** meaning male and female reproductive organs are found on different trees. The **pollen is dispersed by the wind in spring,** but **fertilization does not occur until the fall when the seed has fallen off the tree** and the fleshy seed coat has rotted away. Ginkgos can live up to 1,000 years - and can change reproductive orientation even after hundreds of years!

## SEASONAL CARE

Ginkgo trees can reach **heights of 50 to 80 ft or more.** They prefer **well-drained sites,** but are generally adaptable and one of the best trees for urban conditions. Trees can produce aerial roots on the undersides of large branches, and are sometimes **multi-stemmed** above the root crown.

**WINTER:** Grow seedling ginkgo trees in light shade inside a greenhouse for its first year, and protect it from the cold during its first winter. Once established, it tolerates cold weather well on its own.

**SPRING:** Ginkgo trees flower from April to May.

**SUMMER:** Trees tolerate drought, but not dense shade.

**FALL:** Leaves can be harvested in early autumn; female trees bare seeds that ripen Oct. to Nov.

## NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS

Extracts of ginkgo are traditionally used for **memory-enhancing, mood lifting, and energizing properties.** Ginkgo trees are the only plant species that have **ginkgolides, which can help inhibit allergic responses.** Other properties attributed to the ginkgo: anti-asthmatic, antibacterial, antifungal. Extracts from the yellowed leaf are said to help fight cancer, improve circulation, and increase fertility!

## PROCESSING GINKGO SEEDS FOR FOOD

When the fleshy fruits from the female ginkgo fall in early autumn, gather whole, unmarked ginkgo fruits. Wash the fleshy seed coat away in several changes of water while wearing gloves to avoid the itch-causing constituent, urushiol, also found in poison ivy. Once washed and dried, place seeds in a skillet pan and toast over the heat 5-10 minutes until the shells pop and become speckled brown. Shell and eat.

Recommended to eat no more than 10 in one setting to avoid potential stomach cramping or pain. Bean-like seeds make for a tasty snack!

