

FICUS BENJAMINA Linn.

BALETE

Ficus haematocarpa Blume
Urostigma haematocarpum Miq.
Urostigma benjaminum Miq.

Local names: *Balete* (Ilk., Tag.) *salisi* (Is.)

Balete is found in Northern Luzon to Mindanao, in most islands and provinces, in primary forests at low and medium altitudes. It also occurs in India to Southern China and Malaya.

It is a strangling, smooth plant, assuming a tree-form and reaching a height of 15 meters or more, with dropping branches. The leaves are leathery, oblong-ovate, 6 to 9 centimeters long, with prominent and rather slender point, rounded base, entire margins, smooth, green and shining; the nerves slender, spreading, and not prominent. The petioles are 5 to 10 millimeters long. The fruit is axillary, solitary, stalkless, dark-purple and fleshy when mature, somewhat spherical, and 1 centimeter in diameter.

Balete is planted in Manila as an excellent avenue and graceful shade tree. Rope is made in the provinces from its bast.

Burkill reports that the bark contains 4.2 percent of tannin and that the latex contains 30 percent caoutchouc, along with 59 percent resin. Wehmer records that the wax contains cerotic acid.

Nadkarni states that the bark of the root, the root itself, and the leaves boiled in oil are applied on wounds and bruises. He adds that the juice of the bark has a reputation for curing liver diseases. In rheumatic headache the pounded leaves and bark are applied as a poultice.