



Banyan Tree *Ficus benghalensis*

Did you know...

Kraft Azalea Garden is home to a very large banyan tree?

The banyan tree is native to India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. It is often planted around temples and is considered sacred by both Hindus and Buddhists. The banyan tree is widely cultivated in city parks and botanical gardens throughout the New and Old World tropics.

The Banyan Tree is not cold tolerant and generally only grows in USDA Plant Hardiness Zones 10-12 which begins in an area south of Miami ~ therefore, this large tree in Winter Park is quite unusual. Since the deep freeze in 1989, the number of these amazing trees that survived north of Miami are very few. Although no in-depth research has been done on our tree, it is believed that it survived because of its proximity to a large body of water, Lake Maitland, which warms the area. Some have said this tree may be the northern-most Banyan in the state.

Other large banyans in the state, one surprisingly in St. Augustine, thought to be the most northern location for the species, and one in an Orlando park, succumbed to the 1989 freeze. There is also another banyan in Winter Park on private property, smaller but still very impressive.

The foliage and milky sap of the banyan, along with all of the fig family, can sometimes be an irritant to skin and eyes for especially sensitive people, but most people are not effected.

It is believed the tree was planted in Kraft Azalea Garden when it was developed in 1938. Notable nurseryman Martin Daetwyler was hired to design the garden by well-known residents, George and Maud Kraft, Mayor Frederick Cady, Forney Shepard, Leonard Hackney and Mrs. C. F. Ward. While it is not known specifically how long this special tree has been in our park, staff has confirmed seeing it prior to the 1950s.

So now you know!

