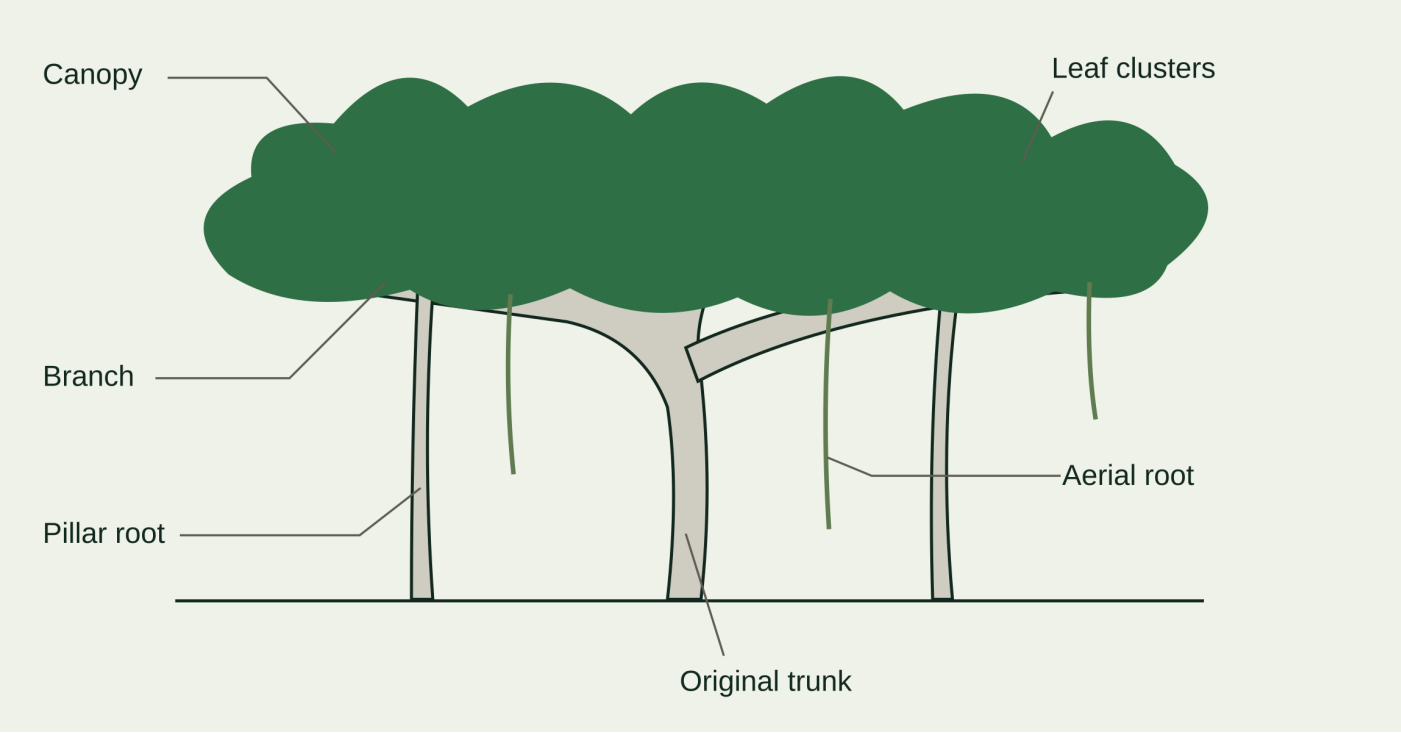
Anatomy of a banyan

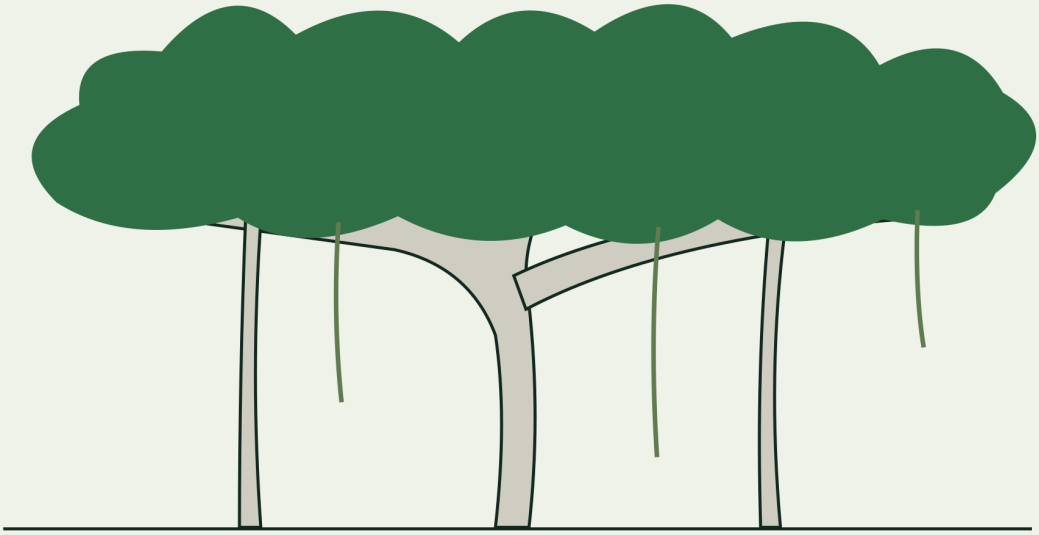


Aerial roots start above ground. Grounded roots can become supporting pillars.

One connected banyan can resemble a grove of separate trunks.

Banyan Trees | Schematic illustration | CC BY-NC 4.0 | Source review: 24 Nov 2026
banyantrees.org/learn/ | Sources: banyantrees.org/banyan/

Name the parts



Label: canopy, branch, original trunk, aerial root, pillar root.

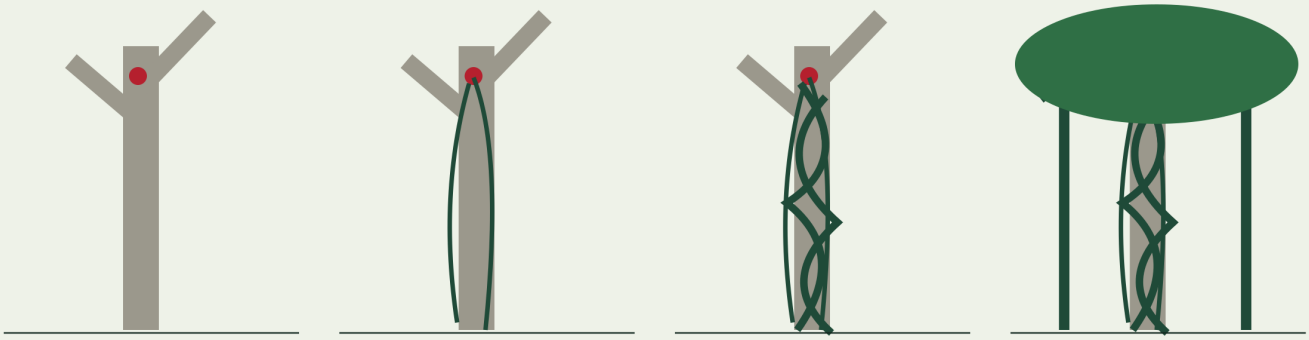
Label the canopy, branch, original trunk, aerial root and pillar root.

Follow a branch to see which roots support it.

Banyan Trees | Schematic illustration | CC BY-NC 4.0 | Source review: 24 Nov 2026
banyantrees.org/learn/ | Sources: banyantrees.org/banyan/

A possible life cycle

One possible strangler-fig life cycle



1. A seed finds a perch
A bird leaves a seed in a tree.

2. Roots descend
Roots reach toward the soil.

3. Roots thicken
A network grows around the host.

4. Pillars support a canopy
Grounded roots support new limbs.

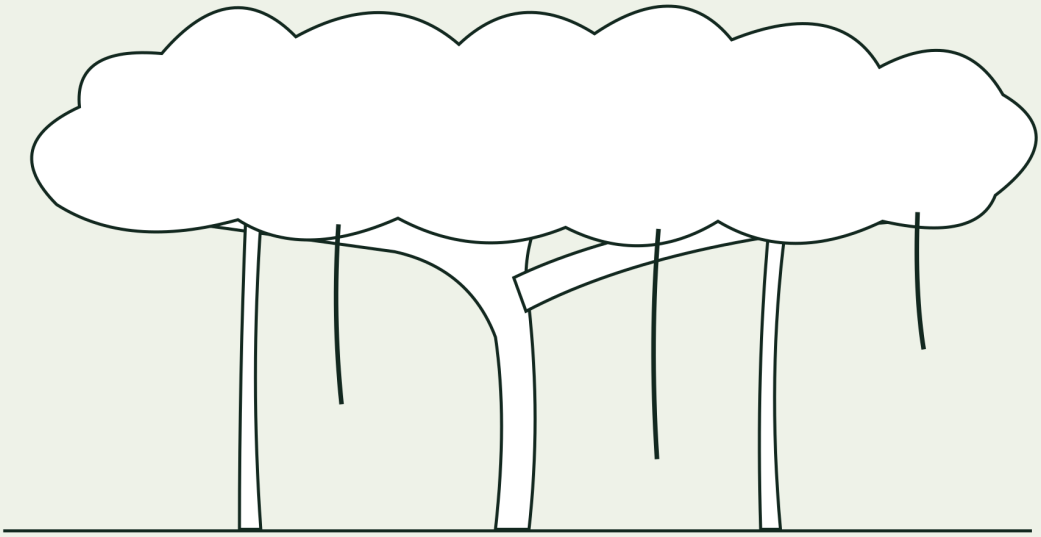
Schematic. Not all banyans begin on a host. The host may die; the rooted fig can remain. · banyantrees.org

A seed can start on a host tree, send roots to soil and form a woody network.

The host may die; the rooted fig can remain. Not every banyan starts this way.

Banyan Trees | Schematic illustration | CC BY-NC 4.0 | Source review: 24 Nov 2026
banyantrees.org/learn/ | Sources: banyantrees.org/banyan/

Colour the canopy



A tree that becomes a grove · banyantrees.org · CC BY-NC 4.0

Banyan bark is often pale grey. Leaves are green; ripe Indian banyan figs are red.

Draw birds or other visitors beneath the branches.

A banyan in five facts

1. The Indian banyan is Ficus benghalensis, a member of the fig family.

2. Some roots hang from branches and become pillars after reaching the ground.

3. The flowers are inside a structure called a syconium: what we call a fig.

4. Tiny fig wasps pollinate the flowers. Different fig species have different relationships.

5. The Bodhi tree is Ficus religiosa, a relative of the Indian banyan.

Look closely. Ask what the evidence shows.

Sources and further reading:

Oxford Plants 400: herbaria.plants.ox.ac.uk/bol/plants400/Profiles/EF/Ficusb

NParks Flora & Fauna Web: Ficus benghalensis

Banyan Trees: banyantrees.org/banyan/for-kids/

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