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Ficus tinctoria

[Synonyms : *Ficus gibbosa*]

DYE FIG is a tree. It is native to south-eastern Polynesia.

It is also known as Humped fig, Mahi, *Masi'ata* (Tongan), and *Mati* (Samoan).

Tinctoria is derived from Latin *tinctus* (dyed, stained, tinged) meaning 'used in dyeing'.

Locally the juice or milky sap in the fruit stems was mixed with leaves from other tropical plants to produce a scarlet dye. Sir Joseph Banks (1744-1820), the English botanist who accompanied Captain James Cook (1728-1779) on HMS *Endeavour* between 1768 and 1771, recorded how he watched Tahitian women staining tapa cloth with this dye – which was also used to paint actors' or warriors' faces.

The tree's bark was a source of cordage and the fibre from the young shoots was used to make fishing nets.