

The Urun Tree

This ancient tree is known locally as the Urun Tree. An evergreen of the *Sapotaceae* family, this variety of tree grows on low-lying ground near the seashore and is often used for windbreaks or thickets around houses. This particular tree, which is estimated to be more than 400 years old, is almost 12 meters high, with an elliptical canopy that extends 13 meters north to south and over 18 meters east to west. It is believed to be the biggest tree of its kind in Okinawa Prefecture.

The *tanetori* was an important festival in which rice seed for the next year's harvest was distributed to the local farmers. It was held beneath this tree until the early years of the Showa era (1926–1989). A hut with a thatched roof—a sacred structure known as an *urun* in the Okinawan language—would be erected here for the duration of the festival. The tree, which the islanders have always looked after with special care, was designated a Village Natural Treasure in 1998.