

Adenanthera pavonina

[Synonyms : *Adenanthera bicolor*, *Adenanthera intermedia*, *Adenanthera microsperma*, *Adenanthera tamarindifolia*]

RED SANDALWOOD is a deciduous tree. Native to south-eastern Asia (especially south-eastern China, India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka). It has tiny faintly fragrant, cream flowers that darken with maturity.

It is also known as *Agati* (Seychellois), *Anikundumani* (Tamil), Barbados pride, *Barighumchi* (Hindi), Barricari seeds, Bead tree, *Bois de condori* (French), Circassian bean, Circassian tree, *Condoribaum* (German), Coral bean tree, Coral pea, Coralwood, False wiliwili, *Gul ganji* (Tamil), *Gurivenda* (Telugu), *Indischer Korallenbaum* (German), Jumbie-bead, *Ki-tokè laut* (Sundanese), *L'eglise* (West Indian), *Madatiya* (Singhalese), *Mad-eta* (Singhalese), *Maklam-ta* (Thai), Peacock fence, Peacock flower-fence, Peacock tree, *Peronías* (Spanish), Polynesian peanut, *Rakia kambal* (Bengali), *Ratangunj* (Spanish), Red bead tree, Red wood, *Réglisse* (French), *Roter Sandelholzbaum* (German), *Saga* (Malay), Sandalwood-tree, *Tanglin* (Filipino/Tagalog), Sandal bead tree, *Segawé sabrang* (Javanese), and Zumbic tree.

Warning – some authorities suggest that the whole tree may be poisonous with particular emphasis on the raw seeds.

Pavonina is derived from Latin *pavonis* (peacock) meaning ‘peacock-blue, or with a conspicuous eye as that seen on a peacock’s tail’.

Apart from their important use in the past by jewellers as an instrument of measurement (each seed weighs about 4 grains) the lens-shaped, smooth and hard-coated, glossy, brilliant red seeds even today have also been made into necklaces (often by children) and have been used in soldering gold ornaments.

In Java (now an Indonesian island) the roasted, shelled seeds have been eaten like soya beans (*Glycine max*) with rice (*Oryza*). Less often in some parts of Asia they have also been formed into cakes.

The tree’s smooth pale grey bark has been used in parts of Asia particularly Indonesia for washing both hair and clothing.

A red dye can be extracted from the red heartwood and this has been used in India for caste marks.

The hard, heavy and strong, durable wood itself is still valued today (especially in Sri Lanka) for making charcoal. In India it has also been used for building homes and making furniture – and has often been viewed as an alternative to sandalwood (*Santalum album*).

Medicinally, a decoction of the leaves has been used in Asia to treat rheumatism and gout, while in the West Indies a similar potion has been favoured for easing colds. The bark and seeds have been used in some parts of Asia as a remedy for snake bites. In India the seeds (powdered) have also been included in treatments for boils, and inflammation.