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Aesculus pavia

[Synonyms : *Aesculus discolor*, *Aesculus splendens*, *Pavia rubra*]

RED BUCKEYE is a deciduous shrub (sometimes trailing) or tree. Native to eastern North America it has small bright red to purplish flowers.

It is also known as Buckeye, Carolina buckeye, Firecracker plant, Horse-chestnut, *Jírovec pávie* (Czech), *Pavie červená* (Czech), Red flowering buckeye, Red horse-chestnut, Red pavia, *Rote Rosskastanie* (German), Scarlet buckeye, Small buckeye, and Woolly buckeye.

Warning – the whole plant is poisonous (particularly leaves and seeds). They can cause nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, gastroenteritis, fever, weakness, inco-ordination, pupil dilation, convulsions, paralysis and possibly death.

Pavia commemorates a Dutch botanist and surgeon, Peter Paaw (1564-1617). who was a highly respected professor at Leiden University where he taught anatomy. Some authorities believe he established a botanic garden there and he is also said to have published treatises on anatomy, botany and physics.

Some North American Indian tribes mixed the hard, glossy brown seeds (previously steeped in water) with wheat flour for a concoction with which to stupefy fish.

Cherokee Indians carried the nut about on their person as a good luck charm – as well as something that could ease the pain of rheumatism or piles.

The Cherokee tribe also put red buckeye to various medicinal uses. A poultice of pounded nuts was applied to sores and cancerous tumours, while either the nuts in some form or an infusion of the roots was used to treat wind. A bark infusion was also used during childbirth.

Today the toiletry industry uses oil from the fruit in bath oils.