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Akebia trifoliata

[Synonyms : *Adenia lobata*, *Akebia lobata*, *Clematis trifoliata*]

AKEBIA is a twining deciduous or semi-evergreen climbing shrub. Native to temperate eastern Asia (particularly China and Japan) it has fragrant chocolate-purple and white flowers.

It is also known as *Akebie à trois feuilles* (French), Chocolate vine, *Kleebblätterige Akebie* (German), *Mitsuba akebi* (Japanese), *San ye mu tong* (Chinese), and Three-leaf akebia. *Trifoliata* is made up of Latin *tri-* (three) and *-folia* (leaved) components meaning ‘with three leaves’.

In Japan particularly the young leaves are dried and infused for a tea. Spring buds and young leaves are eaten and the sausage-shaped, insipid-tasting pale purple fruit (found in Japanese markets in the Autumn) are also eaten raw (often stuffed with a more interesting filling).

Locally the peeled, bleached young stems have provided material for basketry.

Medicinally, akebia is used in Chinese medicine to treat prostate problems. The stems have also been used by herbalists to treat urinary and period problems.