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Anamirta cocculus

[Synonyms : *Anamirta paniculata*, *Cocculus indicus*]

FISH BERRY is a climbing shrub or vine. Native to India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka it has small fragrant, greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as Crow killer, Fish killer, *Garaphala* (Malayalam), Indian berry, *Indische Scheinmyrte* (German), *Kakamari* (Bengali, Telugu), *Kakmari* (Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit), *Kokkelskörnerstrauch* (German), Levant nut, *Ligtang* (Filipino/Tagalog), and *Titta-wel* (Singhalese).

Warning – fish berry is an extremely poisonous plant that affects the central nervous system. In Britain it is a prescription only medicine.

Cocculus is derived from the genus name *Cocculus* meaning ‘like fruit in the *Cocculus* genus’. In the Philippines the stems themselves (in the rainy season particularly) or the bark fibres have been used to make rope for tethering animals or hauling.

Locally the poisonous fruits are used by fishermen to stupefy fish by throwing them whole directly onto the water.

Authorities have noted that fish berry was once used to adulterate beer.

Medicinally, the dried, powdered berries have been employed to destroy lice. Fish berry has also been used as an antidote for morphine poisoning in treatments for some skin diseases, and as a cure for night sweating experienced with certain forms of tuberculosis. It is rarely used today in western medicine.