

Andira inermis

[Synonyms : *Andira jamaicensis*, *Geoffraeya inermis*, *Geoffraeya inermis jamaicensis*, *Geoffraeya jamaicensis*, *Geoffroea jamaicensis*, *Geoffroea jamaicensis* var. *inermis*, *Vouacapoua inermis*]

CABBAGE TREE is an evergreen tree. Native to tropical America it has fragrant rose-purple flowers.

It is also known as *Acapurana* (Brazilian), *Ajunado* (Spanish), *Almendro* (Spanish), *Angelin*, *Arenillo* (Panamanian), *Barbosquillo* (Panamanian), Bastard cabbage bark, Bastard cabbage tree, Bastard mahogany, Bat seed, Brown heart, Cabbage bark, Cabbagebark tree, Cabbage palm, *Cocu* (Spanish), *Cuilimbuco* (Mexican), Dog almond, *Ecorce de Geoffre* (French), Jamaica cabbage tree, *Kohlbaumrinde* (German), *Manteco* (Spanish), *Maquilla* (Mexican), *Moca* (Cuban, and Puerto Rican), Mountain cabbage, Partridge wood, *Rode kabbes* (Surinamese), Worm bark, *Wurmrinde* (German), and Yellow cabbage tree.

Warning – excessive doses of the bark or seeds are poisonous, particularly if preceded or followed by drinks of cold water. It can cause feverish delirium, vomiting and death.

Inermis is Latin (unarmed) meaning ‘spineless, unarmed or without prickles or stings’.

The flowers attract bees and the resultant honey is said to be enjoyable.

When the famous Englishman, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) called at the Cocos Islands in 1836 (on HMS *Beagle*'s homeward leg of her scientific expedition of 1831-1836 for which he had been appointed naturalist) he missed the tree's flowering but learnt of its legendary powers to produce ‘rain’. But this ‘rain’ turned out to be dripping sap exuding from the wounds inflicted by insects such as cicadas.

It can be found in west Africa and in Nigeria the poisonous cabbage tree bark has been used as an ordeal instrument in similar fashion to the bark of the sassy bark tree (*Erythrophleum suaveolens*).

Cabbage tree is valued in some areas for its hard strong timber which has been used for heavy construction work. The red wood has also been made into furniture, and used for turning and for making canes and umbrella handles.

Leaf fibre has provided material for making rope and twine.

The tree has been grown in some areas as a windbreak.

Medicinally, the bark has been used (generally in infusion) to treat both fevers and worms (particularly in Brazilian Amazonia) while the roots have been similarly employed in Senegal.