

*Angostura cuspara*

[Synonyms : *Bonplandia angostura*, *Bonplandia trifoliata*, *Cusparia angostura*, *Cusparia febrifuga*, *Cusparia officinalis*, *Cusparia trifoliata*, *Galipea cusparia*, *Galipea febrifuga*, *Galipea officinalis*, *Portenschlagia trifoliata*, *Sciuris officinalis*]

**ANGOSTURA** (English, French, German, Italian) is a shrub or tree. Found in tropical America (particularly in Venezuela along the banks of the Orinoco), it has small, strongly and nauseously scented, pink-white flowers.

It is also known as *Cuspabaum* (German), *Cusparia* (Italian), Cusparia bark, *Cusparie* (French), and *Kusbaria* (Turkish).

The stem bark can be subjected to steam distillation to extract the essential oil. Generally the bark is treated directly with alcohol to obtain the traditional tincture used in alcoholic beverages.

Warning – large doses of bark can cause diarrhoea.

Angostura's bark is similar in appearance to that of both the nux-vomica (*Strychnos nux-vomica*) and copalchi bark (*Croton niveus*). As trees angostura and nux-vomica are also similar but can be distinguished by their leaves. Those of the former have the initial tobacco-like (*Nicotiana tabacum*) aroma whereas the latter are odourless.

Locally angostura has been used to stun fish.

In 1788 Brande, an apothecary to Queen Charlotte Sophia (1744-1818) who married George III, brought angostura to England (a few years after its first use as a medicine in Madrid), and from then until the late 1800s it was viewed as a reliable tonic. It had originally been introduced as a treatment for fever and its reputation for this still continues in Brazil today.

The bark tincture used as a drink mixer known as Angostura Bitters used to contain an extract of angostura bark. Although this mixer is still known under the same name, gentian root (*Gentiana lutea*) now replaces the angostura bark as an ingredient. It is believed to have been first added to a drink as a mixer in Venezuela in 1824.

Medicinally, angostura has been used in the past to treat malaria, certain bone diseases, fluid retention, and external ulcers.