

Arundinaria gigantea

[Synonyms : *Arundinaria bambusa*, *Arundinaria gigantea* var. *gigantea*, *Arundinaria gigantea* var. *recta*, *Arundinaria macrosperma*, *Arundinaria macrosperma* var. *arborescens*, *Arundinaria macrosperma* var. *suffruticosus*, *Arundinaria macrosperma* var. *tecta*, *Arundinaria tecta*, *Arundinaria tecta* var. *colorata*, *Arundinaria tecta* var. *decidua*, *Arundinaria tecta* var. *distachya*, *Arundinaria tecta* var. *pumila*, *Arundo gigantea*, *Arundo tecta*, *Bambusa hermannii*, *Festuca grandiflora*, *Ludolfia macrosperma*, *Miegia arundinacea*, *Miegia arundinaria*, *Miegia gigantea*, *Miegia macrosperma*, *Miegia pumila*, *Nastus macrospermus*, *Pseudosasa amabilis*, *Triglossum bambusinum*]

GIANT CANE is a bamboo. Native to eastern and southern United States it has dull greenish-yellow stems.

It is also known as Canebrake, Cane reed, Carolina cane, Giant reed, Large cane, Southern cane, and Switch cane.

The plant forms impenetrable thickets known as ‘canebrakes’. [Some authorities point out that runaway slaves sheltered from their pursuers in dense canebrakes before the advent of planes.]

Gigantea means ‘gigantic, very or unusually large (or tall)’.

It should be noted in reference to the seeds that flowering groves or canebreaks that mature to seed presage disaster for the giant cane. The seeds are such an attraction that the cane does not stand a chance. Everybody wolfed them and got fat – from bears, deer, wildcats, squirrels and turkeys to man (both local Indian tribes and settlers). In addition there is apparently a particular larva that burrows into the seed and eats the starch. It all contributes to the slowness with which the canebreak recovers. If also (as was normal early in the 20th Century) livestock are driven into the canebreaks to graze, the areas are ravaged by fire, or the groves are permitted to give way to cultivated crops the devastation of the vast areas previously covered by them is then easily understood.

Local North American Indian tribes and in due time European settlers used the seeds (like corn) for making bread. The very young shoots are used today in Oriental dishes and they are also harvested, cooked and canned for use as a vegetable.

The Choctaw and Cherokee tribes used giant cane for basketry, and the former also burnt it as fuel. Flutes were fashioned from the wood by both the Seminole and Cherokee tribes, and the latter also made blowing tubes for working melted silver. The wood was used by several tribes including the Houma, Seminole and Cherokee to make such weapons as arrows, blowguns, spears, knives and bows.

According to records the roots provided some medicines for the Seminole and Houma tribes, the latter using them for treating some kidney disorders.

Young stalks provide a fodder that is enjoyed by cattle.

The American immigrants often cut long canes to make fishing poles or rods – and shorter lengths can still be used today for making furniture.