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Bauhinia purpurea

[Synonyms : *Bauhinia kurzii*, *Bauhinia triandra*, *Bauhinia violacea*]

PURPLE BAUHINIA is a semi-evergreen shrub or tree. Native to south-eastern Asia, particularly southern China and India, it has orchid-like, white or brown streaked, pale pink to rosy purple flowers with prominent stamens.

It is also known as *Alibanban* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Atamtti* (Marathi), *Basavanapadu* (Kannada), *Bauhinia*, *Bodanta* (Telugu), *Boroda* (Oriya), Bull hoof tree, Butterfly tree, Camel's foot tree, *Chongkho* (Thai), Geranium tree, *Kanar* (Hindi), *Kanchan* (Telugu), *Karallu* (Punjabi), *Khairwal* (Hindi), *Khwairalo* (Nepalese), *Koiral* (Bengali), *Mahahlegani* (Burmese), *Mandari* (Tamil), Mountain ebony, Orchid tree, Ox hoof tree, Purple bauhinia, Purple camel's foot, Purple orchid tree, St. Thomas tree, *Segapu* (Tamil), *Suvarnamandaram* (Malayalam), and *Vanaraja* (Sanskrit).

The flowers with their delicate vanilla-like fragrance are pollinated by bees. The bean-like fruit pods explode when ripe to scatter their shiny dark brown seeds up to 45 ft. away.

Warning – the bark on the underground root is very poisonous.

Purple bauhinia is similar in appearance to orchid tree (*Bauhinia variegata*).

Purpurea is Latin (purple-coloured) with reference to the flowers.

Locally, particularly in India, the flowers and fruit are eaten as a vegetable, especially in curries or pickles – and Indian men also eat the flower buds.

The leaves provide cattle fodder.

In India the dark brown wood is used commercially for buildings. It is a fairly hard wood and is used locally for making agricultural implements too.

The bark has been used for tanning and dyeing.

Medicinally, a wash made from the bark provides a local remedy for ulcers, and the bark or leaves have also been used in poultices applied to sores. The raw flowers can serve as a laxative.