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Blumea balsamifera

[Synonyms : *Baccharis salvia*, *Blumea balsamifera* var. *microcephala*, *Conyza balsamifera*, *Conyza odorata*, *Pluchea balsamifera*]

NGAI CAMPHOR is a perennial. Native to south-eastern Asia.

It is also known as Ai camphor, *Bhangaruda* (Marathi), *Chapa* (Javaese and Malay), *Kaharonda* (Hindi), *Kalahad* (Gujarati), *Kam pawng* (Thai), *Ngai* (Chinese), and *Sembung* (Sundanese).

The leaves smell strongly of camphor when bruised.

Ngai camphor is a source of a camphor which is obtained by plant distillation.

Balsamifera is derived from Latin *balsamum* (sweet-smelling balsam gum) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components meaning ‘balsam-bearing, balsamic or like balsam’.

The plant has been used by local fishermen as a fish poison.

The Chinese are said to have used the plant as an ingredient in the preparation of scented inks.

Powdered leaves are understood to have been used in Asian veterinary medicine, particularly in the treatment of horses and elephants.

In some parts of Asia the leaves are eaten as a vegetable (and at the same time are believed to counter intestinal worms). Perhaps with the latter point in mind the plant has been used as a condiment in some parts of Vietnam.

For many Asians the leaves have almost attracted the respect normally shown to a panacea. In the Philippines it has been carried on the person as a protection against illness, and in Malaysia it is said to have been worn similarly to fend off accidents when hunting elephant.

The camphor distilled from the plant is said to have attracted greater respect in Chinese medicine than that obtained from other sources such as the camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*). The distillation process used by the Chinese is described in their *Pen ts'ao* written in about 1600.

Medicinally, the leaves and/or the root have been used in Asia like camphor (*Cinnamomum camphora*) in treatments for fever and lung disorders.