

*Bromelia pinguin*

[Synonyms : *Agallostachys fastuosa*, *Agallostachys pinguin*, *Ananas pinguin*, *Bromelia acama*, *Bromelia fastuosa*, *Bromelia ignea*, *Bromelia paraguayensis*, *Bromelia pinguin*, *Bromelia sepiaria*, *Karatas pinguin*, *Karatas pinguin*, *Karatas plumieri*]

**WILD PINEAPPLE** is a perennial. Native to South America and the Caribbean, it has small pink, red or white flowers.

It is also known as *An-nan'na pengwen* (Creole), Caraguata, Colombia pita, *Karwa* (Waimiri Atroari South American Indians), *Pengouin* (French), Penguin, Pinguin, Pita fibre, and Wild pine.

Warning – eating the fruit can cause mild oral inflammation, and the fruit juice can create a burning sensation whenever it touches skin (and the skin will peel a few hours later). The hooked spines on the leaf edges are sufficiently strong that they can injure birds and animals.

The plum-like, yellow berries are sold in local markets and eaten not least by the Wayapi South American Indians of French Guiana. The juice is used to make what authorities describe as a 'desirable' drink. In El Salvador the flowers are eaten fried.

Some of the South American Indian tribes still use the long, hard and strong durable leaf fibre for making cord (which has been used in the past for stringing their hunting bows). Negro slaves also extracted the fibre and they twisted it into cord – one which matched hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) in quality. This was used for making cattle ropes and whips.

The fibre from the pineapple-like (*Ananas comosus*), reddish-green leaves provides an alternative to that obtained from jute (*Corchorus capsularis*).

Today wild pineapple is recommended by some authorities as an ideal ornamental and animal-proof hedging plant and examples of its use in this capacity can certainly be seen in some of the Windward Islands in the Caribbean.

Medicinally, local herbalists have recommended that the shoots at the base of the plant be eaten raw or cooked to ease period pains and the fruit juice has been taken to get rid of intestinal worms.