

You are viewing one of thousands of biographies – click below for more, including Search box and access to Plant associated organisations.

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Brosimum utile

[Synonyms : *Brosimum galactodendron*, *Brosimum utile* subsp. *ovalifolium*, *Galactodendrum utile*, *Piratinera utilis*]

COW-TREE is a tree. It is native to tropical America (particularly Venezuela).

It is also known as Milk tree.

Utile is Latin (useful, serviceable, fit, profitable, beneficial).

Richard Spruce (1817-1893) the English botanist, visited South America in the middle of the 19th Century and was one of several explorers to taste the sweetish, white latex which can be tapped from the tree's bark and drunk raw like milk. Before him Baron von Humboldt (1769-1859), the German naturalist and explorer who travelled through uncharted areas of South America with the French botanist, Aimé Bonpland (1773-1858) on their 1799-1804 expedition, also came across this- tree. He recorded how he had watched local American Indian tribes collect and drink the 'milk', especially first thing in the morning when he understood the latex was running at its greatest.

The latex has also been used as a base for chewing gum and South American Indians have used the bark for making material for sails and blankets. Today they use this material for clothing for dances.

Some authorities view the wholesome and agreeable qualities attributed to the latex by local people with some scepticism as it contains resin and other detracting components. It used also to be added to the prized latex obtained from the para rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*) as a rubber adulterant.

Medicinally, some American Indian tribes in the Amazon region believe the latex is a remedy for indigestion, others view it as a tonic (and purgative) and yet others consider it a cure for respiratory ailments such as asthma.