

*Cananga odorata*

[Synonyms : *Cananga odoratum*, *Canangium fruticosum*, *Canangium odoratum*, *Canangium scortechinii*, *Unona odorata*, *Uvaria axillaris*, *Uvaria odorata*]

**TRUE YLANG YLANG** is an evergreen tree. Native from tropical Asia to Australia it has very fragrant, orange-yellow flowers with many crowded stamens.

It is also known as *Alangilán* (Colombian, Spanish), *Alangilang* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Annona asiatic*, *Arbre d'huile de Macassar* (French), *Ban reishi* (Japanese), *Cadmia* (Colombian, Spanish), *Canadga* (Italian), *Cananga* (English, Portuguese, Spanish), *Canangabaum* (German), *Canang des Moluques* (French), *Canang odorant* (French), Chanel No.5 tree, *Chettu sampangi* (Telugu), *Fereng* (Thai), Fragrant cananga, *Ilanga* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Ilang-ilang* (English, Filipino/Tagalog, French, German, Russian, Spanish), *Ilang-ilangbaum* (German), *Ilang-ilang de Bornéo* (French), *Ilang-ilang des Philippines* (French), *Ilang-ilang en arbre* (French), *Iraniran noki* (Japanese), *Ka dan nga thay* (Laotian), *Kadatnyan* (Burmese), *Kananga* (Javanese, Malay, Sundanese, Turkish), *Kananga duchistaia* (Russian), *Kenanga* (Malay), *Kenanga utan* (Malay), *Kanango odora* (Esperanto), *Kradang nga tai* (Thai), Macassar oil plant, Macassar oil tree, *Makosoi* (Fijian), *Maladi* (Tamil), *Mohokoi* (Tongan), *Moso'oi* (Samoan), *Mosui* (Fijian, Samoan), Perfume tree, *Sagasein* (Burmese), *Wana-sapu* (Singhalese), Yang-yang, *Yi lan* (Chinese), Ylang ylang (English, Spanish), Ylang ylang tree, and *Zheltyi Ilang-Ilang* (Russian).

When the flowers have turned yellow and the scent is at its strongest they are harvested in darkness or the early dawn before the daytime heat dissipates the scent. One tree is said to be able to produce approximately 265 lb. of flowers, equivalent to about 12 oz. of essential oil.

Essential oil can be distilled from the flowers. It is understood that as an inordinately large number of flowers would be needed for any significant strength of 'scent' the crop is often boosted by the addition of oil extracted from one of the species of *Pimenta*.

*Odorata* is derived from Latin *odor* (scent, smell, odour) meaning 'scented or fragrant'.

This is the true ylang ylang prized by the perfumery industry. Macassar oil, the fashionable men's hairdressing oil popular in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe and North America, was actually coconut oil (*Cocos nucifera*) scented with true ylang ylang. Today it can be found as an ingredient in Chanel's classic perfume, 'Number 5' and in the more recent Revlon, 'Charlie'.

Locally in Asia the trunk with its soft, greyish-white wood used to be made into canoes, or drums, as well as clogs and floats for fishing nets. It was also used in Malaysia for making sheaths for the traditional *kris* or dagger, and it has been made into packing cases and small household implements.

In Thailand an infusion of the flowers is used after bathing. In many native countries it is also laid between layers of material (or worn on the person) to impart its scent, or as in Malaysia worn in the hair. The scent has also been used in Malaysian mourning rituals practised at the graveside.

The tree has been grown along roadsides in Malaysia for its shade.

Today the essential oil is used commercially by the perfumery, toiletry and cosmetics industries  
eg. perfumes, soap.

Medicinally, the oil has been used locally to treat gout, headaches and eye inflammation. The  
flowers have been used locally to improve the flavour of unpleasant tasting medicine.