

Canarium ovatum

[Synonyms : *Canarium melioides*, *Canarium pachyphyllum*]

JAVANESE ALMOND is an evergreen tree. Native to the northern Philippines it has aerial roots and spindle-like purplish-black fruit.

It is also known as *Arbol de la nuez pili* (Spanish), Galip nut, *Kanari* (Malay), *Nangai* (French), Ngali nut, Oily pili, Philippine nut, Philippines nut, *Pili* (Filipino), *Pilinuss* (German), *Pilinussbaum* (German), Pili nut, Pili nut tree, and *Pili-pilauai* (Filipino/Tagalog).

The kernel (which for some has a flavour superior to that of almond, *Prunus dulcis* var. *dulcis*) is said to have the highest oil-content (70%) of any known nuts. The edible seed nut oil is known as Pili Nut Oil.

Warning – if eaten in large quantities the raw seeds can be purgative.

Ovatum is derived from Latin *ovum* (egg) meaning ‘egg-shaped’.

Locally the boiled and seasoned fruit pulp is eaten, and the oily almond-tasting (*Prunus dulcis* var. *dulcis*) seeds (kernels) are eaten raw, toasted, fried, roasted, sugar-coated, salted or glazed. The nuts are also used in baked foods and ice cream and, when roasted and powdered, used to extend chocolate (*Theobroma cacao*). Young shoots are added to salad.

The edible seed oil is used for cooking, and in confectionery and soap manufacture. It is said by some to rival olive oil (*Olea europaea*) in quality while others consider it to be a viable alternative to cotton (*Gossypium*) seed oil.

Even the hard fruit shells can be of value. Not only are they useful as fuel but as they are both inert and porous both horticulturists and gardeners have found that they are an ideal medium for growing such plants as orchids.

At the turn of the 20th/21st Centuries in the Philippines most of the nuts there continue to be harvested from the wild trees and there has been limited exportation of them to, for instance, Hong Kong, China, Guam in the Mariana Islands of the western Pacific and Australia. (For the Chinese pili nuts are one of the significant ingredients in their traditional mooncakes familiar on many festive occasions.) It is beginning to be appreciated that the nut could become a major crop and thought is being given to its cultivation on a commercial scale (apparently propagation methods and viable ways of separating the hard thick shell from the kernel have been of particular concern) to obtain nuts of a reliable quality. Apart from the Philippines it seems that Hawaii is also addressing these issues and has developed some cultivated varieties that are creating interest.

Medicinally, local herbalists have prescribed the raw nuts as a purgative.