

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

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Carludovica palmata

[Synonyms : *Ludovia palmata*, *Salmia palmata*]

PANAMA HAT PALM is a palm-like perennial. Native from Middle America to Bolivia it has a spike (spadix) of small flowers.

It is also known as Hippi-happa, Jipijapa, Jippi-jappa, *Paja toquilla* (Spanish), Palmitta, Panama hat plant, *Panamapalme* (German), Screwpine, and Toquilla palm.

Fibres are extracted from the leaves.

Palmata means ‘lobed like an open hand with outstretched fingers or hand-like’.

Panama hats, made from strips of the dried young leaves (6-15 for 1 hat) have been the pride of Ecuador for well over a hundred years. The finest can take 18 days to make, and the coarsest can be made in 1 day. These are designed primarily to protect the wearer from sun.

During the Californian gold rush in the mid-19th Century many of the ‘Forty Niners’ bought their hats in Panama as they made their way north, and during the 1880s the hats were exported from Ecuador to the United States via Panama. As a result the hat became misnamed ‘panama’. In Ecuador they are also known as Jipijapas or *Sombreros de Montecristo* after the names of the Ecuadorean coastal regions where the plant is harvested.

The fibre is used commercially today for the manufacture of hats (an important industry in Ecuador – about 1 million hats a year), and it is also used for making baskets, matting, roofing, brooms and fly swatters.