

Carpinus caroliniana

[Synonyms : *Carpinus americana*]

AMERICAN HORNBEAM is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to eastern North America it has green catkins.

It is also known as American muscle tree, Blue beech, *Bois de fer* (French), *Charme de Caroline* (French), Hornbeam, Ironwood, Musclewood, and Water beech.

Warning – some authorities note that the wood can irritate some skins.

Caroliniana means ‘of or from North or South Carolina (United States)’.

Records suggest that North American Indians either did not know of or did not use the yellow dye that can be obtained from the bark. It is surmised that it was the European settlers who took advantage of this.

The Chippewa however did use the hard, tough wood for the main supporting pole in their wigwams.

The light brown wood from the tree not only provided fuel but was also made into small objects, such as tool handles and levers, or mallets and golf club heads.

Squirrels and songbirds enjoy the nutlets.

Medicinally, although some authorities believe it is unlikely that North American Indian tribes turned to the American hornbeam for some of their remedies, others record its use by both the Cherokee and Iroquois tribes to treat diarrhoea particularly in babies. The latter tribe and some of the Delaware are said to have used the root or bark for various female problems, and it was a Cherokee remedy for some urinary disorders. They and the Iroquois also used American hornbeam in treatments for some skin ailments. North American settlers are thought to have taken bark tea as a tonic, and this was also used to treat diarrhoea, intermittent fever and loss of appetite.