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### *Cassia alata*

[Synonyms : *Cassia bracteata*, *Cassia herpetica*, *Herpetica alata*, *Senna alata*]

**RINGWORM CASSIA** is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to the tropics (particularly American) it has black buds opening to yellow and orange flowers.

It is also known as *Akapúlko* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Anjali* (Tamil), Candelabra bush, Candle bush, Candlestick cassia, Candlestick senna, Christmas candles, Craw-craw, Cure-all, *Dadmari* (Bengali), *Dadmurdan* (Hindi), *Dartier* (French West Indies), *Desay* (Dominican), *Duawusu* (Twi), *Elakajam* (Malayalam), Empress candle plant, *Flügelkassie* (German), French guava, *Gelenggang* (Malay), Golden bush, Golden candlestick, Impetigo bush, *Katepeng badak* (Sundanese), *Ketepeng* (Javanese), *Khirkak* (Thai), Ringworm bush, Ringworm senna, Ringworm shrub, Seven gold candlesticks, *Simaya-visa* (Telugu), Winged cassia, and *Zèb-à-dartres* (Creole).

The flowers are attractive to bees.

Warning – the fruit can cause purging, and the whole plant may be poisonous in large amounts. The plant is poisonous for livestock and fish.

*Alata* is derived from Latin *ala* (wing) meaning ‘winged’.

In Africa the leaves have been used like henna (*Lawsonia inermis*).

The toasted leaves have sometimes been used to make a coffee-like drink in south-eastern Asia.

The bark is used for tanning.

In parts of Malaysia small quantities of fruit pods have been eaten raw or steamed.

Medicinally, local treatments use the seeds for ringworm, and the leaves provide remedies for skin ailments eg. rubbed on the skin the leaf juice counters ringworm. In Guatemala an infusion of the root has been used to treat rheumatism, and has also been taken as a strong laxative. The fresh leaf juice is used in Ghana where it is squeezed directly into the eye to treat some eye disorders. In the West Indies generally, the leaves have been infused as a tea prescribed as a remedy for hypertension. A decoction of leaves and flowers has been used in India as a treatment for bronchitis and asthma. This species is also believed to provide a local antidote for snake bites. The flowers have been used in Malaysia to treat chronic diarrhoea.