

### *Catalpa bignonioides*

[Synonyms : *Bignonia catalpa*, *Catalpa catalpa*, *Catalpa cordifolia*, *Catalpa syringaefolia*, *Catalpa syringifolia*]

**INDIAN BEAN TREE** is a deciduous tree. Native to south-eastern North America it has small fragrant, conspicuously purple and yellow speckled, white flowers and leaves that turn yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as *Almindelig trompetkrone* (Danish), *Amerika ki sasage* (Japanese), *Amerikanischer Trompetenbaum* (German), *Arbre aux haricots* (French), Bean tree, Beau-tree, *Bignonia catalpa* (English, Italian), Candle tree, *Catalpa*, *Catalpa americana* (Italian), *Catalpa commun* (French), *Catalpa comune* (Italian), *Catalpa de Caroline* (French-Canadian), Catawba, Catawba tree, Caterpillar tree, Cigar tree, Common catalpa, Common Indian bean, Eastern catalpa, Fish bait tree, *Gemeiner Trompetenbaum* (German), *Gewöhnlicher Trompetenbaum* (German), *Groene trompetboom* (Dutch), Indian bean, Indian cigar, Red Indian bean tree, *Katal'pa bignoniavaia* (Russian), *Katal'pa bignonievidnaia* (Russian), *Katalpa bignóniovitá* (Slovakian), *Katalpa obecná* (Czech), *Katalpa trubachovitá* (Czech), *Katalpa trubačovitá* (Czech), *Katalpa zwyczajna* (Polish), *Kkot gae o dong* (Korean), *Mei guo zi* (Chinese), *Mei guo zi shu* (Chinese), *Nan fang zi* (Chinese), Smoking bean, Southern catalpa, *Surmia zwyczajna* (Polish), Tree bignonia, *Trompetboom* (Dutch), *Trompetenbaum* (German), *Trompetkrone* (Danish), *Trompettræ* (Danish), and *Zigarrenbaum* (German); and in flower language it is said to symbolize 'beware of the coquette'.



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Warning – the roots are poisonous and must not be taken internally. Handling the flowers can cause dermatitis and the scent is alleged to be poisonous.

*Bignonioides* is made up of the genus name *Bignonia* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning 'like plants in that genus'.

The tree was a familiar sight in the fields of the North American Cherokee Indians.

Indian bean tree is believed to have been introduced to England in 1726 by the English naturalist, Mark Catesby (c.1679-1749) on his return home from his second and shorter visit to North America. However, according to some authorities this tree had been introduced to southern Europe far earlier – in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.

The hard wood was once used for fencing. It has also been used in general construction and interior finishing, as well as for making furniture, handles and picture frames. It has been burnt as fuel too.

Today the tree is more familiar in the context of fishing. Its leaves provide food for a large black caterpillar (often called a 'catalpa worm') much sought after as bait by American fishermen. Indian bean tree is also popular with environmentalists as it can be planted in areas subject to landslide or soil erosion as the roots act as a binding agent.

Medicinally, all parts of the tree have been used by herbalists for various treatments, not least the bean-like, brown fruit pods that in decoction have provided a drink for easing asthma and whooping-cough.