

*Chrysophyllum cainito*

[Synonyms : *Cainito pomiferum*, *Chrysophyllum bicolor*, *Chrysophyllum bonplandii*, *Chrysophyllum cainito* var. *jamaicense*, *Chrysophyllum cainito* var. *martinicense*, *Chrysophyllum cainito* var. *pomiferum*, *Chrysophyllum cainito* var. *portoricense*, *Chrysophyllum eggersii*, *Chrysophyllum monopyrenum*, *Chrysophyllum olivaeforme*, *Chrysophyllum oliviforme*, *Chrysophyllum portoricense*, *Chrysophyllum sericeum*, *Cynodendron bicolor*]

**STAR-APPLE** is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to tropical America and the West Indies, it has small greenish-yellow to mauvish-white flowers.

It is also known as *Caimito* (Spanish), *Caïmitte* (Creole), *Cainito*, *Camitier* (French), Damson plum, Golden leaf, Kamoti, *Rata-lawulu* (Singhalese), Satin leaf, *Seemaipala-pallam* (Thai), *Sternapfel* (German), *Vú sũa* (Vietnamese), and Wild star apple.

The hair on the leaves which gives them their coppery colour beneath is unusual in that each hair has needle-pointed ends and is joined to the leaf centrally by a single short stalk.

*Cainito* is a local West Indian name for the tree. The common name Star-apple is said to be a description of the arrangement of the seeds in the cut fruit.

The trees, which were a source of food for the North American Seminole Indians, have long been cultivated in tropical American countries, especially for their apple-like (*Malus*), white to greenish-purple fruit that when ripe are eaten raw. In Jamaica the fruit are preserved and Jamaicans also mix the fruit pulp with orange juice to make a drink known as ‘matrimony’.

In similar fashion to the North American Seminole Indian tribe’s practice with the icaco plum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*) authorities have noted that star apple once played an important role in local marriage rituals. A decoction of wood ash was placed on the tongue and it was believed that this cleansed the body and strengthened the union.

The wood is used on a commercial scale today for cabinetmaking.

Medicinally, the jelly-like fruit flesh was found locally to be helpful in reducing internal inflammation from laryngitis or pneumonia. The bark has been used locally to make a tonic.