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### *Clitoria ternatea*

[Synonyms : *Clitorea ternatea*, *Clitoria bracteata*, *Clitoria ternatea* var. *alba*, *Clitoria ternatea* var. *albiflora*, *Clitoria ternatea* var. *bracteata*, *Ternatea ternatea*, *Ternatea vulgaris*]

**BUTTERFLY PEA** is an evergreen twining, climbing vine. Native to tropical and sub-tropical regions (authorities appear to be uncertain as to precisely where – possibly India or tropical America), it has sweet pea-like, greenish-yellow throated, blue (occasionally white) flowers.

It is also known as *Ang chan* (Thai), *Aparajit* (Bengali, Hindi), *Aparajita* (Sanskrit), Asian pigeonwings, *Bejuco de conchitas* (Puerto Rican), Blue pea, Blue vine, *Bunga biru* (Malay, Sundanese), Butterfly bean, Clitoria, *Erg el agrab* (Arabic), *Gokarni-safed* (Gujarati), *Karhakartun* (Tamil), *Katarodu-urel* (Sinhalese), *Kembang teleng* (Javanese), Kordofan pea, *Liane madame* (Seychellois), *Liane ternate* (Seychellois), Mussel-shell pea, *Nil-katarodu* (Sinhalese), Pigeon wings, *Pokindang* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Siniherne* (Finnish), Wing-leaved clitoria, and *Zapatillo de la reina* (Salvadoran).

Warning – the whole plant is alleged to be poisonous, especially the roots and seeds.

*Ternatea* means ‘of or from Ternate (an island in the Moluccas, East Indies)’.

In some parts of the tropics such as the Philippines, the fruit pods are eaten as a vegetable like runner beans (*Phaseolus coccineus*), and in Ambon (Indonesia) and Malaysia the flowers are used to tint boiled rice (*Oryza*) blue. In other parts of south-eastern Asia the leaf juice has sometimes been used as a green food colouring.

The blue flower dye can be used, like litmus (*Rocella tinctoria*), to detect acidic and alkaline liquids.

Australians grow the plant as a forage crop. It can be eaten by sheep and goats.

Butterfly pea has also been cultivated for a green manure.

Authorities believe that butterfly pea seed had been introduced to western Europe (from the Moluccas) by at least the late 1730s by which time the plant was being cultivated there.

Medicinally, the roots are understood to have strong laxative qualities, and the seeds have been used as a purgative. The plant has also provided an antidote for snake poisons.