

You are viewing one of thousands of biographies – click below for more, including Search box and access to Plant associated organisations.

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Copernicia prunifera

[Synonyms : *Arrudaria cerifera*, *Copernicia cerifera*]

WAX PALM is a palm. Native to north-eastern Brazil it has spikes (spadices) of spirally arranged flowers.

It is also known as Brazilian wax palm, Carnauba palm, *Carnaubapalme* (German), Carnauba wax palm, and *Wachspalme* (German); and in flower language (as for all palms) is said to be a symbol of victory.

The young leaves are harvested three times in a season, and the wax particles are beaten off. off the leaves. These particles vary in colour according to the age of the leaves. Those on the surface of young leaves will be corn-coloured, and as the leaves mature so this colour changes through dark brown to black. It takes fifty of the huge leaves (before their bloom is lost) to give 6 oz. of wax that, of all natural vegetable waxes, is the hardest and has the highest melting point.

Prunifera is derived from Latin *prunus* (plum, damson, sloe) and *-fer* (bearing, carrying) components.

This tree is considered by some authorities to be the most important known source of a natural vegetable wax and authorities indicated at the end of the 20th Century that there are about 100 million wax palm trees in Brazil. [It is understood that the families of one particular South American Indian tribe in north-eastern Brazil are virtually entirely dependent upon the wax palm and its varied produce for their existence.]

The leaf wax was once used in the manufacture of gramophone records.

Today the wax is used on a commercial scale in lipsticks and mascaras by the cosmetics industry. [The grade of wax necessary for this industry is harvested from the youngest leaves and is known as 'Prime yellow'.] It is also used in scented candles, and in varnish and polishes (used on floors, furniture, cars and shoes).