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### *Couroupita guianensis*

[Synonyms : *Couratori pedicellaris*, *Couroupita acreensis*, *Couroupita antillana*, *Couroupita froesii*, *Couroupita guianensis* var. *surinamensis*, *Couroupita idolica*, *Couroupita membranacea*, *Couroupita peruviana*, *Couroupita saintcroixiana*, *Couroupita surinamensis*, *Couroupita venezuelensis*, *Lecythis bracteata*, *Pekea couroupita*]

**CANNONBALL TREE** is a deciduous tree. Native to tropical South America (particularly Guyana and Surinam) it has large, apricot-pink and gold flowers with an unusual, lopsided arrangement of central stamens and a penetrating fragrance.

It is also known as *Arbre á bombes* (French), *Bala de cañón* (Spanish), *Boesi* (Dutch), Carrion tree, *Kailaspati* (Gujarati), *Kanonenkugelbaum* (German), and *Taparon* (German).

The flowers are believed to be pollinated by bats. The fruit take 8-9 months to ripen by which time they have a disagreeable, very sour smell.

*Guianensis* means ‘of or from Guyana (South America)’.

In a wind the fruit can pound the trunk (and each other) and this and the sound of them falling to the ground when ripe have been likened to the noise of a cannonade or rifle fire, hence the name cannonball tree.

The unripe fruit can still be used by some South American Indian tribes to prepare a popular drink which is usually served in the empty fruit shells.

The ripe fruit are said to be enjoyed by local monkeys, and in Guyana they have also been fed to livestock.

Cannonball tree was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1881 and its first flowering there occurred in 1898. The flowers have acquired some religious significance in the Country and are offered at Buddhist temples and shrines.