

Drimys winteri

[Synonyms : *Drimys aromatica*, *Drimys chilensis*, *Drimys granatensis*, *Drimys punctata*, *Drimys winteri* var. *andina*, *Drimys winteri* var. *chilensis*, *Drimys winteri* var. *morenonsis*, *Drimys winteri* var. *punctata*, *Drimys winteri* var. *quinoensis*, *Wintera aromatica*]

WINTER'S BARK is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native from Mexico to Tierra del Fuego it has small jasmine-scented, yellow-centred, creamy-white flowers.

It is also known as *Canelobaum* (German), *Gewürzrindenbaum* (German), Pepper bark, True winter's bark, Wintera, Winter bark, Wintersbark drimys, Winter's cinnamon, and *Wintersrinde* (German).

Winteri commemorates Captain John Winter, the English navigator who found winter's bark and was one of the officers who set off with Drake (c.1540-1596) when he circumnavigated the world from 1577-1580.

In Mexico and Brazil the powdered bark is sometimes used as a condiment.

The wood is used locally for house interiors, furniture, packing cases and boxes, and the bark offers a treatment for dysentery and stomach ailments.

Although the bark reached England long beforehand, the plant itself was only introduced there in 1827.

This bark was first brought to European attention by one of the officers, Captain John Winter, who set out with the English navigator and pirate, Sir Francis Drake (c.1540-1596) on his circumnavigation. It was suggested that the drug was a medicine very powerful against the scurvy.

Between 1577-1580 Drake made a round the world trip and Winter captained HMS *Elizabeth*, the only one of the remaining vessels in the party, he thought, to survive rounding Cape Horn. (Drake did get through on HMS *Pelican* which he then re-christened *Golden Hind*.) The seamen were always on the lookout for cures for scurvy and in the Straits of Magellan Winter discovered a tree whose bark provided a remedy and returned to England in 1578 with samples. 200 years later when Captain Cook (1728-1779), the English navigator, was making his second discovery voyage, he took advantage of this information and made use of the bark (and countered its acrid taste with honey). Today however it is rarely employed outside its natural habitat where the bark continues to provide a condiment and digestive stimulant.