

*Garcinia hanburyi*

[Synonyms : *Garcinia morella*]

**GAMBOGE** is an evergreen tree. It is native to south-eastern Asia (particularly Thailand).

It is also known as Camboge, Gambodia, Gummigutta, Gutta cambodia, Gutta gamba, Hanbury's garcinia, Indian gamboge, *Pasupuvarne* (Telugu), *Pinnar-pulli* (Malayalam), *Rong* (Thai), *Tamal* (Bengali), *Tamala* (Sanskrit), *Tamel* (Hindi), *Tamil* (Marathi), Tom rong, and *Trevalsinni* (Tamil).

Trees at least 10 years old are tapped during the rainy season for the milky resin which then congeals.

Warning – powdered gamboge can cause violent sneezing. It should only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. Too large doses can cause nausea, vomiting, purging and death.

*Hanburyi* commemorates an English pharmacist, Daniel Hanbury, FRS (1825-1875) who wrote extensively. In his research into the botanical origins of drugs of uncertain provenance at that time, he travelled widely on the European Continent and also accompanied Sir Joseph Hooker (1817-1911), to the Middle East (particularly Syria). While holidaying on the Côte d'Azur in 1864 he came across the ruins of the Palazza Orengo standing in the olive terraces on a promontory known as Punta della Mortola (near Menton across the adjacent French border). He persuaded his wealthy brother, Sir Thomas Hanbury of its ideal position for a botanical garden and La Mortola was purchased in 1868 – and from this the Hanbury Botanical Garden was born, a haven still for exotic plants from all over the world..However Daniel Hanbury had always been prone to ill health and would not see its fruition as he died seven years later from typhoid fever and jaundice and authorities note that the Garden effectively became a memorial to him.. Apart from being elected a Fellow of The Royal Pharmaceutical Society and The Royal Society, he was a member of several other highly respected London bodies including the Linnean Society (for which he served as a Vice-President and Treasurer) and the Microscopical Society. He wrote many articles for Society journals and in 1874, with the Swiss pharmacist, Friedrich Flückiger (1828-1894), also published *Pharmacographia: A History of the Principal Drugs of Vegetable Origin met with in Great Britain and British India*.

The resin yields a yellow dye from which the golden-yellow ink is made in Thailand for writing on their traditional black-paper books. In Europe the resin has been used to make watercolour paints and a lacquer varnish for coating metals called Pear-ground lacquer.

Today the gum (known as Cambodian gamboge or Siamese gamboge) is still used in dyes, medicines and artists' paints.

Medicinally, the resin was once recommended for lowering blood pressure and as a treatment for fluid retention. It has also been used to treat worms and constipation.