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### *Gardenia augusta*

[Synonyms : *Gardenia florida*, *Gardenia grandiflora*, *Gardenia jasminoides*, *Gardenia radicans*, *Varneria augusta*]

**GARDENIA** is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to tropical China it has very fragrant, white flowers.

It is also known as *Bunga Cina* (Malay), Cape jasmine, Cape jessamine, Common gardenia, *Gandharaj* (Sanskrit), Garden gardenia, *Gardenie* (German), Jasmin, *Kacha piring* (Javanese, Malay, Sundanese), *Pak-sema-liva* (Chinese), and *Put* (Thai); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of 'I am too happy', refinement, and 'transport of joy'.

The flowers mature to creamy yellow and drop in one day.

Essential oil is extracted from the flowers.

*Augusta* means 'most notable or majestic'.

In the East, especially China, the flowers provide a flavouring for tea.

A yellow dye is extracted from the fruit pulp and sold locally particularly in southern China.

There it has been used like saffron (*Crocus sativus*) as a food colouring.

Gardenia is believed to have been introduced to Europe in 1761. It is this species particularly which is so familiar in Western florists' shops and is cultivated under glass in many countries, especially for buttonholes. In some parts of Asia gardenia has been cultivated as hedging.

The essential oil is a commercial ingredient used today by the perfumery industry.

Medicinally, the leaves and root have been used in Asia internally to treat fevers, nervous disorders and indigestion. Externally the leaves have provided an ingredient for poultices applied to ease headaches. The fruit are used in Chinese medicine to treat jaundice, kidney disorders and respiratory ailments.