

Hibiscus tiliaceus

[Synonyms : *Hibiscus abutiloides*, *Hibiscus circinnatus*, *Hibiscus guiensis*, *Hibiscus porophyllus*, *Hibiscus similis*, *Hibiscus tiliaceus* var. *abutiloides*, *Hibiscus tiliaceus* var. *genuinus*, *Hibiscus tiliaceus* var. *tortuosus*, *Hibiscus tiliaefolius*, *Hibiscus tortuosus*, *Pariti grande*, *Pariti tiliaceum*, *Paritium abutiloides*, *Paritium circinnatum*, *Paritium elatum* var. *abutiloides*, *Paritium tiliaceum*, *Paritium tiliifolium*]

CORKWOOD is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to tropical regions (including Malaysia, and the Galapagos Islands) it has pure yellow changing to red-maroon flowers with long stamens forming a maroon-tipped, yellow central tube.

It is also known as *Algodão da praia* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Algondoncillo* (Panamanian, Spanish), *Bala* (Sanskrit), *Baru* (Malay), *Beach hibiscus*, *Bebaru* (Malay), *Beli-patta* (Singhalese), *Bladder ketmia*, *Chelwa* (Bengali), *Corkwood*, *Cotton tree*, *Cottonwood*, *Cuban bast*, *Ettagogu* (Telugu), *Fau* (Samoan, Tongan), *Hawaiian tree hibiscus*, *Hau* (Hawaiian), *Hau tree*, *Hibisco maritimo* (Spanish), *Huang jin* (Chinese), *Lagoon hibiscus*, *Linden hibiscus*, *Mahoe* (English, Panamanian, Spanish), *Majagua* (Spanish), *Malabágo* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Mountain mahoe*, *Nirpparutti* (Tamil), *Oo-hamaboo* (Japanese), *Paw-tale* (Thai), *Po na* (Thai), *Po thale* (Thai), *Purau* (French, Tahitian), *Rope mangrove*, *Seacoast mallow*, *Sea hibiscus*, *Seaside mahoe*, *Tree hibiscus*, *Vau* (Fijian), *Waru* (Javanese), *Yama-asa* (Japanese), and *Yellow mallow tree*.

The opened flowers only last a few hours and mature to red by nightfall. The seeds are often dispersed by the sea.

Tiliaceus is derived from the genus name *Tilia* meaning ‘like plants in that (linden/lime) genus’.

Local Malaysian tribes used the bark fibre for cord and the stems to make fishing spears. The bark has also been used to make paper.

The white wood is still made into furniture locally in Malaysia.

In Malaysia too the very young leaves have occasionally been eaten as a vegetable.

Some authorities note that Australian Aborigine tribes are said to have included the roots in their diet.

The leaves have been fed to cattle in some regions.

In Hawaii, and other parts of the Pacific, the tough but flexible wood has been used for making the outriggers on canoes. While in what is now Indonesian Java axe-handles were often made from this lightweight wood, and in parts of south-eastern Asia it was also used for making rough household equipment.

The bark not only provided fibre for ropes and caulking but in Fiji was softened and used to make the fringe-like skirts worn traditionally by the Fijian women. Bark fibre has also been used for making fishing nets.

Corkwood is sometimes cultivated in mangrove swamps to bind the mud in land reclamation projects.

Today Europe imports fibre for cordage, and for making nets, sails and coarse bags.

Hawaiians have used corkwood as a source of medicine. Part of the inner bark was prescribed for use during childbirth – and this, or the flower bases, were taken as a laxative by both

adults and children. Shoots and buds were chewed to ease a dry throat and the bark was an ingredient in a medicine used for some chest disorders. Medicinally, in the Pacific the flowers have been made into a decoction as a treatment for catarrh. The roots are also used medicinally.