

*Inga edulis*

[Synonyms : *Feuilleea edulis*, *Inga benthamiana*, *Inga cipo*, *Inga conferta*, *Inga edulis* var. *grenadensis*, *Inga minutula*, *Inga scabriuscula*, *Inga vera*, *Inga ynga*, *Mimosa inga*, *Mimosa ynga*]

**MONKEY TAMARIND** is an evergreen tree. Native to tropical and subtropical America (especially the Amazon region) it has ball-like fragrant masses of white stamens (similar to a dandelion clock, *Taraxacum*).

It is also known as *Anga* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Chalahuite* (Mexican, Spanish), *Chalaite* (Spanish), *Cuajiniquil* (Spanish), *Essbare Inga* (German), Food inga, *Guaba* (Spanish), *Guaba de bejuco* (Spanish), *Guama* (Honduran, Spanish), *Guamo* (Colombian), *Guamo bejuco* (Venezuelan), *Guamo santafereño* (Spanish), *Guamo San Antonio* (Spanish), Guava (English, Spanish), Guava machete (English, Spanish), *Guavo-bejuco* (Spanish), Ice cream bean, *Inga* (German), *Ingá* (Portuguese), *Inga cipo* (Spanish), *Ingá-cipo* (Amazonia, Portuguese), *Ingá de macaco* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Inga Fruchte* (German), *Ingagnazul* (Argentine), *Ingá macarrão* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Ingá-rabode-mico* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Inga s'edobnaia* (Russian), *Jiniquil* (Mexican, Spanish), *L'aliovka žltá* (Slovak), *Pacae* (Peruvian, Spanish), *Pacay* (Peruvian, Spanish), *Pacayer*, *Pois doux* (French), *Shimbile* (Peruvian), *Struchok-moroxhenoe* (Russian), and Ynga.

*Edulis* is Latin (edible).

The cylindrical and often spirally twisted fruit pods, eaten raw or cooked in puddings as a flavouring, were enjoyed by the Inkas as they still are locally today. South American Indian tribes in the Colombian region have long made an alcoholic drink, known as *cachiri*, from the fleshy seed-covering which is particularly enjoyed during festivals.

Apparently monkey tamarind can be found cultivated close to most homes of the Choco Indians of Panama – and they use its wood for the uprights in their homes as they believe it is a durable wood that will not rot in soil easily. Wood from the wild trees has also been collected locally for fuel.

As with many of its close relatives monkey tamarind is cultivated as a shade tree especially on coffee (*Coffea*) and cocoa plantations (*Theobroma cacao*), and to a lesser extent tea (*Camellia sinensis*) or vanilla plantations (*Vanilla planifolia*). The tree can also be grown as a windbreak.

Medicinally, local South American Indian tribes are believed to have taken a root or leaf and bark decoction to treat diarrhoea and also to have applied it externally to ease rheumatism. The bark and fruit have been employed as a remedy for fluid retention – and the Cuna tribe particularly are said to have used monkey tamarind for curing headaches.