

Jasminum grandiflorum

[Synonyms : *Jasminum officinale* var. *grandiflorum*]

SPANISH JASMINE is a climbing or twining evergreen shrub. Possibly native to Arabia and India (especially the Himalayan region), it has small and very fragrant, pink (often reddish) beneath, white-faced flowers.

It is also known as *Aitojasmiiini* (Finnish), Catalonia jasmine, *Chambeli* (Hindi, Sanskrit), *Chameli* (Bengali), Common jasmine, Great Spanish jasmine, Italian jasmine, *Jaji* (Telugu), *Jalee* (Indian), *Jasmin* (French, German), *Kund* (Indian), *Kuth bela* (Indian), *Luktjasmin* (Swedish), *Melati gambir* (Javanese), *Pichakam* (Malayalam), *Pichi* (Tamil), and Royal jasmine; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of sensuality.

Essence can be extracted from the flowers.

Grandiflorum is made up of Latin *grandis* (large) and *-flora* (flowered) components.

Spanish jasmine may have been brought to Spain (possibly from India) by the Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama (c.1469-1525) in the 1520s. Certainly it was introduced into cultivation in parts of Europe by the Moors who were long familiar with it in Arab lands.

The perfumery industry demands many flowers. At Grasse in France the cultivated blooms are harvested by hand at dawn (they wither in the sun) for the enfleurage process. 1 lb. of flowers (about 3,500 blooms) will produce less than one fiftieth of 1 oz. of jasmine oil. The delicate, sweet smell is so distinctive that for years it was thought impossible to imitate it artificially with any degree of success.

The perfume obtained from the flowers has long been admired in western Europe. In the 17th Century English ladies wore 'jessamy gloves'. Their scent could be freshened by rubbing the leather with jessamy butter which could be purchased for a shilling an ounce by the end of that Century. Today the essence is one of the basic ingredients of floral perfumes, and scented soaps.

Medicinally, in India leaf juice is applied to corns and the flowers are used to treat headaches, skin diseases and scorpion stings.