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Jateorhiza palmata

[Synonyms : *Cocculus palmata*, *Jateorhiza calumba*, *Jateorhiza meirsii*, *Menispermum palmatum*]

CALUMBA is a twining, climbing perennial vine. Native to tropical East Africa (particularly northern Mozambique), it has greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as *Bikle* (Persian), Bitter columba root, Calumbo, Colomba, Colomba root, Colombo, Colombo-root, Foreign colombo, Jateorhiza, *Kalamba* (Telugu), *Kalamba veru* (Tamil), *Kalamb-kachri* (Indian), *Kalamb-ki-jar* (Hindi), and *Sakel hamam* (Arabic).

Palmata means 'lobed like an open hand with outstretched fingers or hand-like'.

Long used in East Africa for treating diarrhoea (in Mozambique it has provided a valued traditional treatment for dysentery) and as a general tonic, as well as the source of a yellow dye, it was introduced to Europe by the Portuguese traders in the 17th Century via Colombo. At that time calumba was believed to be a general antidote for poisons but it was not until the 1770s that it attracted much attention in Europe – and by 1781 a kilo could attract a price of \$12.

Today it is still respected in Africa and India, especially for treating gastric disorders. It is also recognized formally by some European countries as a bitter for use as a tonic.