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Jatropha gossypifolia

[Synonyms : *Adenoropium gossypifolium*, *Jatropha gossypifolia*]

BELLYACHE BUSH is a deciduous shrub. Native to the North American tropics and subtropics it has deep purple flowers.

It is also known as African coffee, *Bauchwehbusch* (German), Bellyache weed, French body cutter, *Jarak kosta merah* (Javanese), *Kattamanaku* (Tamil), *Médecinier bâtard* (French), *Medsinyen barachèn'n* (Creole), *Nepalemu* (Telugu), Papaw weed, Red fig-nut flower, *Sabu dang* (Thai), *Simayavanakku* (Malayalam), Wild cassada, and Wild physic nut.

Warning – the leaves, the seeds (or 1 seed) in under an hour can cause a burning sensation in the throat, diarrhoea, gastroenteritis and vomiting. In addition the seeds may cause deafness, dizziness, muscular cramps, pupil dilation, dehydration, coma and possibly death. The sap (latex) accidentally splashed in the eyes is said to be able to cause temporary blindness, while on the skin it can cause rashes and blistering. It is also poisonous for animals.

Gossypifolia is made up of the genus name *Gossypium* and Latin *-folia* (leaved) components meaning 'with cotton plant-like leaves'.

According to Hindu legend Siva's liking for the flowers explains why the bellyache bush became a sacred plant in India

It is said that the seeds, despite their poisonous nature, are particularly enjoyed by doves and wild fowl.

Twigs are used locally (in northern India particularly) to clean teeth.

In some regions bellyache bush has been cultivated as hedging.

Medicinally, local treatments have employed a leaf decoction for some venereal diseases, the seed oil has been used in treatments for leprosy and the root has provided an antidote for snake bites.