

Jatropha multifida

[Synonyms : *Adenoropium multifidum*]

CORAL PLANT is a shrub or tree. Native to tropical and subtropical North America it has tiny, scarlet flowers.

It is also known as Chinese umbrella tree, Coral bush, French physic-nut, *Jarak china* (Javanese), *Jarak gurita* (Sundanese), *Korallenpflanze* (German), *Malaiyamanaku* (Tamil), *Maná* (Spanish), Physic-nut, Red coral, Sp Spanish physic-nut, Tyle berry, and *Vishabhadra* (Sanskrit).

An oil is extracted from the seeds.

Warning – the leaves, the fruit, the seeds (or 1 seed) or an overdose of oil can cause in under an hour 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. Child deaths have been recorded from eating the fruit. It is also poisonous for animals.

Multifida is Latin (cloven into many parts) meaning ‘divided many times’.

Although the fruit are extremely poisonous claims have been made that the leaves have been eaten as a vegetable with no ill effects.

The seeds have been used for criminal poisonings.

The oil has been used on the now Indonesian island of Java for lighting.

Medicinally, despite the fruit’s poisonous nature the seeds (roasted) have been used in the Caribbean to treat fevers and venereal disease. In India the latex has been applied to ulcers and wounds.