

Limonia acidissima

[Synonyms : *Feronia elephantum*, *Feronia limonia*]

ELEPHANT APPLE is a deciduous tree. Native from India to the Indonesian island of Java, it has small, pale green flowers with dull red stamens.

It is also known as *Diwul* (Singhalese), *Gellingai* (Malay), Indian wood apple, *Kaitha* (Hindi), *Kapittha* (Sanskrit), *Kathbel* (Bengali), *Kavitha* (Hindi), *Kothu* (Gujarati), *Ma-khwit* (Thai), *Narivila* (Tamil), *Velaga* (Telugu), *Vilangai* (Tamil), *Villa* (Tamil), *Villati* (Tamil), and Wood apple.

Feronia gum (also known as Velampisini) can be extracted from elephant apple.

Acidissima means 'extremely sour'.

In Thailand the tree's sap or gum yields a yellow dye that is used to make an ink for writing on palm leaves.

These very seedy fruit can be used to make drinks, chutney and jellies.

The fruit are used as a soap substitute in Japan.

In view of one of the common names it is hardly surprising to learn that elephants enjoy eating it - as also do monkeys.

The hard and durable, heavy greyish wood has been used locally for making agricultural implements, as well as for general construction. It has also been used for furniture and smaller items such as toys, tool handles, rulers and boxes.

On a commercial scale the gum provides an alternative today for gum arabic (*Acacia senegal*), and it is used as a glue and an ingredient in water-colours, varnishes and some paints.

Medicinally, the leaves are employed in India to treat indigestion. The green fruit can be used as what is considered by some to be an inferior alternative for bael (*Aegle marmelos*) in the treatment of dysentery and diarrhoea. The ripe fruit can be chosen for treating kidney infections.