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### *Maranta arundinacea*

[Synonyms : *Maranta indica*, *Maranta protracta*, *Maranta ramosissima*, *Maranta silvatica*, *Phrynium variegatum*]

**ARROWROOT** (English, French, German) is an evergreen perennial. Native to tropical America (from Brazil to Mexico) it has small, greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as *Angkrik* (Javanese), *Araluk* (Singhalese), *Ararot ag* (Turkish), *Ararut* (Bengali, Malay), *Ara ruta*, *Arrowroot Pflanze* (German), *Aruaru* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Aruruttukkilangu* (Tamil), Bermuda arrowroot, *Cannacoro* (Italian), *Chuk shue* (Chinese), *Erba de freccie* (Italian), *Hulankiriya* (Singhalese), Indian arrowroot, *Koova* (Malayalam), *Larut* (Sundanese), Maranta arrowroot, Maranta starch, Obedience plant, *Palagunda* (Telugu), *Pfeilwurz* (German), *Tikhor* (Hindi), *Ubi garut* (Malay), and West Indian arrowroot.

The underground stem is commercially harvested and a portion of the bearing buds is replanted. Starch is extracted from the underground stems.

Warning – arrowroot can cause an allergic reaction (reddened eyes, skin rashes, stuffy nose) in some people.

The extracted arrowroot starch has a similar appearance to that which can be obtained from potato (*Solanum tuberosum*), sago (*Metroxylon sagu*), rice (*Oryza*) or cassava (*Manihot esculenta*).

*Arundinacea* is derived from Latin *arundo* (reed) meaning ‘reed-like’.

Arrowroot is believed to have been introduced to western Africa by the early Portuguese traders.

The tuberous roots have been eaten as a vegetable, boiled or roasted. It is easily digestible and has been used as an invalid food. In China arrowroot is used as a thickener for soups and sauces as an alternative to cornflour over which it has several advantages in this context.

This starch has also been used by the textile industry eg. in sizing cotton – and an unexpected modern use for it is as a coating in the manufacture of computer print-out paper.

Medicinally, the roots have been used locally in poultices to treat wounds.