

Mimusops elengi

[Synonyms : *Kaukenia elengi*]

BULLET WOOD TREE is an evergreen tree. Native to Indomalaysia it has very fragrant, white turning brown flowers.

It is also known as *Bakula* (Sanskrit), *Bakulam* (Malayalam), *Baula* (Oriya), *Borsai* (Gujarati), *Bunga tanjong* (Malay), Indian bulletwood, *Marouc* (French), *Maulsari* (Hindi and Punjabi), Medlar, *Mukalai* (Tamil), *Phi-kum* (Thai), *Pokok tanjong* (Malay), Spanish cherry, Tanjong tree, *Tanjung* (Javanese and Sundanese), and Tanjung tree.

The ripe pale yellow turning orange-red berries with their with a whisker-like tip are eaten raw locally and the seeds yield an edible oil which is used locally for cooking.

The flowers are cultivated for their great fragrance (the essential oil distilled from the flowers is used in making perfumes). In Malaysia children make the flowers into garlands and Javanese women often wear them in their hair while in Thailand the women infuse the flowers for a scented cosmetic applied after bathing.

The bark has been used for tanning and certainly in parts of India it has also been used to obtain a brown dye.

In India too the durable red wood has been chosen for piling and building bridges and boats, as well as for marine equipment such as oars and masts. It has been used for housebuilding, agricultural implements and tool handles too, as well as for making oil mills and rice pounders, carts, axles, shafts, wheels, cabinetwork (the wood takes a good polish) and walking sticks. The wood has also been burnt as fuel.

Authorities on south-eastern Asia believe that bullet wood tree's prime value in the region is as a timber tree and that its secondary virtues lie in the vegetable seed oil, the edible fruit, its culinary flavouring attributes and the essential oil from the flowers.

Medicinally, local herbalists have used the bark for treating skin disorders, and the leaves or bark as an antidote for snake bites or for easing headaches. The bark and flowers have offered a remedy for fever or diarrhoea, and have also been prescribed as a tonic, and the seeds have been used to treat constipation in children in parts of India. Dysentery has been cured by eating the ripe fruit pulp. The root can also be an ingredient in some medicines taken internally – and both the bark and the leaves have offered alternative treatments for toothache.