

*Monodora myristica*

[Synonyms : *Annona myristica*, *Monodora borealis*, *Monodora claessensii*, *Monodora grandiflora*]

**CALABASH NUTMEG** is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to western Africa it has fragrant, off-white beneath, yellow-marked, purple-brown flowers.

It is also known as African nutmeg, *Awerewa* (Twi), *Ayirew-amba* (Fanti), Calabar nutmeg, *Efuaba* (Sefwi and Vigne), False nutmeg, Jamaica nutmeg, *Kalebassenmuskat* (German), *Moscadero de Africa* (Spanish), *Motukrodua* (Ashanti), *Muscade de calabash* (French), West African nutmeg, and *Yikwi* (Ewe).

*Myristica* is derived from Greek *myristicos* (fragrant, fit for anointing).

The aromatic dried seeds (which have a hot taste) are sold in local markets (in Africa and the Caribbean) and used ground as a condiment with food – like nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) hence the references to it in some of the common names. (The nutmeg-scented fruit pulp is also edible.)

The whole dried seeds also serve as rosary beads. They have also been ground and the powder mixed with tobacco to flavour snuff.

The hard wood from this tree has been used for carving and for general carpentry.

In West Africa The Gambia issued a 4 Dalasi postage stamp with a calabash nutmeg design. Calabash nutmeg was introduced to the Caribbean from Africa some time during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century during the time of the Slave Trade – but it did not reach Sri Lanka until 1897.

Some authorities on India claim it is a feature of gardens in Calcutta today.

Medicinally, local herbalists have applied the roasted and powdered seeds to skin sores and wounds. They have also recommended that the forehead be rubbed with chewed seeds as a cure for headaches and that a piece of root be chewed to ease toothache.