

*Morus rubra*

[Synonyms : *Morus rubra* var. *tomentosa*]

**RED MULBERRY** is a deciduous tree. Native to eastern North America it has small, greenish catkins.

It is also known as American mulberry, American red mulberry, *Moruša červená* (Slovak), *Moruso ruĝa* (Esperanto), *Morušovník červený* (Czech), and Red morus.

Warning – the milky juice in the leaves and unripe fruit can affect the nervous system and can cause stomach upsets and hallucinations. It may also cause dermatitis.

*Rubra* is derived from Latin *ruber* (red) with reference to the colour of the fruit.

The loganberry-like, purplish-red to black fruit seem to be popular with everyone, humans, animals and birds, especially poultry – and pigs.

Several North American Indian tribes enjoyed them including the Comanche, Cherokee and Seminole. The fruit were prepared for storage in various ways by for instance the Omaha, Cherokee and Iroquois to provide food for Winter or when out hunting. The Iroquois also made a sauce from the berries, and the Cherokee used the fruit to make jam or dumplings. Indian tribes in the southern states of North America are believed to have used the bark to make a coarse cloth, and ropes – and the Seminole Indians used the plant to make their hunting bows.

A few North American Indian tribes including the Meskwaki turned to red mulberry for medicine. The Creek tribe used it as a stimulant and to cause vomiting, while the Cherokee seems to have chosen it as a purgative or laxative and a treatment for dysentery and worms. Both the Creek and Alabama tribes took an infusion or decoction of root for some urinary problems – and the Rappahannock rubbed the sap on ringworm.

Today the wood is used in ship and boat-building, and the fruit are fed to pigs and poultry. Medicinally, the bark has been used locally to expel tapeworm.