

You are viewing one of thousands of biographies – click below for more, including Search box and access to Plant associated organisations.

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Murraya koenigii

[Synonyms : *Bergera koenigii*, *Chalcas koenigii*]

CURRY LEAF TREE is a deciduous or evergreen shrub or tree. Native to India and Sri Lanka, it has tiny often yellow-tinged, white flowers.

It is also known as *Bai karee* (Thai), *Barsunga* (Bengali), *Basango* (Oriya), *Bhersunga* (Oriya), *Bignay* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Bizari* (Swahili), *Bowala* (Punjabi), *Currybaum* (German), *Curryblätter* (German), *Curry leaf*, *Curry levelik* (Hungarian, Norwegian), *Daun kari* (Indonesian), *Daun kari pla* (Malay), *Feuilles de cari* (French), *Fogli di cari* (Italian, Spanish), *Gandanim* (Punjabi), *Girinimba* (Sanskrit), *Hoja* (Spanish), *Kalnim* (Hindi), *Karapincha* (Singhalese), *Kareapela* (Malayalam), *Karibevu* (Kannada), *Karipat* (Marathi), *Karivepaku* (Telugu), *Karivepu* (Malay), *Karrílauf* (Icelandic), *Karry blad* (Danish), *Karuveppilai* (Tamil), *Kerriebladeren* (Dutch, Swedish), *Khi be* (Lao), *Meetha neem* (Hindi), *Mitholimdo* (Gujarati), *Nim leaves*, *Pindosin* (Burmese), and *Surabhinimba* (Sanskrit).

Bark, root and leaves have an aromatic, curry-like smell. The dried leaves lose any smell in a few days. Fresh leaves yield an oil known as Limbolee oil.

Koenigii commemorates the name of a Polish botanist and physician, Johann Gerhard König (1728-1785) who in 1757 was a pupil of the famous Swedish naturalist and physician, Carolus Linnaeus. He went to India in 1768 as a medical missionary; in 1774 he became Naturalist to the Nawab of Arcot then Naturalist and Botanist to the British East India Company in 1778. He maintained contact with his European peers and made many field trips with his friend William Roxburgh (1751-1815), the Scottish botanist and physician, who was serving as a medical officer in the Madras Medical Service when they met. He then became Superintendent of Smalkot Botanic Garden. He died from dysentery and left his papers to Joseph Banks who apparently contended that König had been worthy of his appointment with the East India Company 'a thousand-fold over in matters of investment, by the discovery of drugs and dyeing ingredients valuable for the European market'.

The pungent spicy-smelling leaves are a widely used flavouring in Asian cooking. Fresh they are used whole (when, like bay leaves (*Laurus nobilis*) they are often removed from a dish before it is served) or torn or fried before being added to food. They are also dried and powdered – and authorities point out that they are an important ingredient in some dishes such as curries and mulligatawny soup. For some parts of India the dark blue-tinged, black berries have provided a famine food.

Limbolee oil has offered a fixative for perfume used in the manufacture of soap.

The tree's wood has provided local fuel.

Curry leaf tree, which is cultivated on farms and in gardens for its leaves, is also appreciated among environmentalists. Its fast growth and soil binding properties are in much demand.

South-east Asian authorities suggest that it is the timber of curry leaf tree which is especially prized in the region and other flavouring, fragrant or medicinal qualities fill secondary roles there.

Medicinally, local herbalists have employed a bark, root and leaf decoction in their ministrations. The green leaves have been eaten raw to ease dysentery and also to counter

symptoms of snake bites, while the bark and roots have been used in the external treatment of animal bites.