

Murraya paniculata

[Synonyms : *Camunium exoticum*, *Chalcas camuneng*, *Chalcas exotica*, *Chalcas paniculata*, *Murraya banati*, *Murraya exotica*, *Murraya odorata*, *Murraya omphalocarpa*, *Murraya paniculata* var. *omphalocarpa*]

ORANGE JASMINE is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to south-eastern Asia and Australia it has small very fragrant, white flowers.

It is also known as Burmese boxwood, Chinese box, Chinese myrtle, Cosmetic bark tree, Curry leaf, *Etteriya* (Singhalese), *Gekkitsu* (Japanese), Hawaiian mock orange, Jasmine, Jasmine-orange, *Kamini* (Bengali), *Kamuning* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Kemuning* (Malay), *Mai keo* (Thai), *Marchula* (Hindi), Mock orange, *Nagagolunga* (Telugu), Orange jessamine, Satinwood, *Simaikkonji* (Tamil), and *Thanaka* (Burmese).

The flowers bloom several times a year. The heavy wood (known as Satinwood) darkens from pale yellow to light brown after being cut and is durable under water.

Paniculata means ‘pyramidal flower clusters’.

Like its close relative curry leaf tree (*Murraya koenigii*) its leaflets are used in the kitchen for their curry-like flavouring.

Locally women sometimes wear the very fragrant white flowers in their hair – and they are used in Java in cosmetics and perfume. Some Thai and Burmese women (the latter Country is referred to as Myanmar today) use Thanaka powder (the sweet-scented ground roots or wood) as a face powder. Records also mention that children have used the fruit juice to colour their nails.

This hard wood has been used for making tool handles and for turning and veneering. Satinwood has also been used in Java (and other parts of Asia) for making walking sticks and cutlery handles. Apparently the rootwood is beautifully figured and in Malaya is much prized for kris-handles.

Orange jasmine with its small orange to red berries is not only cultivated as hedging but also as an ornamental plant – and can be subjected to the rigours imposed by bonsai enthusiasts. In some areas local people believe the typhoons will arrive when orange jasmine breaks into flower.

Experts on south-eastern Asia have indicated that orange jasmine’s timber is of the greatest importance in the region and that the essential oil and medicinal and ornamental virtues are of secondary value.

Scientific research is reported to have shown that thyroid activity in rats is reduced by the coumarin in these leaves.

Medicinally, local herbalists have prescribed the leaves for treating dysentery and diarrhoea. A leaf decoction has provided a mouthwash to ease toothache and powdered leaf has been dusted over wounds. Chinese medicine has employed the plant in anti-rejection agents for implants – and in Java a leaf infusion has been used to counter tapeworm.