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*Nicotiana trigonophylla*

[Synonyms : *Nicotiana attenuata*, *Nicotiana palmeri*]

**WILD TOBACCO** is an annual to perennial. Native to the southern United States it has greenish-white or yellowish flowers.

It is also known as Coyote tobacco, and Desert tobacco.

Warning – all parts of the plant are poisonous. Whether applied to the skin or chewed or swallowed it can cause twitching, shaking, shivering, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, breathing difficulties, disturbed vision and death.

*Trigonophylla* is derived from Greek *treis* (three), *gonu* (angle) and *phyllos* (leaf) components meaning ‘with three-cornered leaves’.

Apparently some North American Indian tribes cultivated wild tobacco by scattering seeds on the ashes of burnt algaroba (*Prosopis glandulosa*).

It has been smoked by some of the North American Indians, including the Yuma, Havasupai, Tohono O’Odham, Hopi and Cahuilla. Some such as the Hopi and Hualapai smoked it on ceremonial occasions. But some authorities indicate that beyond any other tribes the Cahuilla seem to have placed the greatest faith in the plant’s powers. It played a significant role in all their ceremonial ritual (whether for say rain for crops or their abundant harvest, through the community’s health and well-being, to the safe passage of travellers to their destination) – and apart from smoking or chewing the leaves, they also made a drink from them.

Records also indicate that the Cahuilla Indians identified medicinal qualities in wild tobacco. Apart from applying the leaves to wounds they used leaf smoke to alleviate earache – and they prescribed a leaf infusion when it was necessary to cause vomiting.