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Oncoba spinosa

FRIED EGG TREE is a spiny evergreen shrub or tree. Native to tropical Africa (especially Arabia) it has showy camellia-like, sweetly scented white flowers with many prominent yellow stamens.

It is also known as African dog rose, *Asra-toa-dua* (Twi), Fried egg flower, *Hagila* (Ethiopian), *Mbhovau* (Tsonga), Snuff box tree, and *Snuifkalbassie* (Afrikaans).

Spinosa is Latin (thorn, spine) meaning ‘spiny’.

It is said that the small, leathery and hard-skinned, shiny brownish-yellow berries are eaten occasionally. However it is understood that they are more often hollowed out and cut and polished to make snuff-boxes.

According to some authorities local children place fresh fruit on a fire to heat them then as soon as they begin to spit they rescue them and toss them on to the ground where they give out an explosive report. The ripe fruit are also dried whole and secured to children or to the ankles or arms of adult dancers and, with the rattling dried seeds inside them, they then act like maracas.

Fried egg tree has been cultivated as hedging.

The wood has been used for inlay work.

This plant was introduced to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1883.

Various authorities on south-eastern Asia suggest (surprisingly, in view of the foregoing) that fried egg tree is firstly a source of vegetable oil and fats obtained from the sour-tasting yellow pulp.

The plant has featured in the design of a 205 franc stamp printed between 1997 and 2000 for the Central African Republic.

Medicinally, liquid from the boiled roots and leaves was drunk as a treatment for some forms of venereal disease in the Gold Coast (now part of Ghana) and local African medicine has also used parts of the root for treating dysentery and bladder problems.