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*Paraderris elliptica*

[Synonyms : *Deguelia elliptica*, *Derris elliptica*, *Galedupa elliptica*, *Pongamia elliptica*]

**DERRIS** (English, German) is a climbing vine. Native to eastern India, Malaysia and New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea and the Indonesian state of Irian Jaya – the latter re-christened Papua on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2000), it has pink, red or whitish flowers.

It is also known as *Akar tuba* (Malay), Derris root, *Kalam paw* (Thai), *Tuba* (Malay), *Tubawurzel* (German), and *Tublí* (Filipino/Tagalog).

Warning – derris is a poisonous plant for some animals but harmless for mammals. The foliage can kill cattle.

*Elliptica* means ‘elliptic (curved sides longer than wide and broadest in the middle) or oval’ usually with reference to leaf shape.

In tropical Asian countries its juice is used on poisoned arrows, and the bark, flowers and root are all used as fish poison. (For the latter purpose one authority points out that the poison will be dispersed quite quickly in flowing water but still water can take years to be restored to its original state.)

Derris is harmless for mammals. In various regions, including Singapore and Malaysia, the roots are pounded in water and provide an insecticide for termites and crickets. Elsewhere it is used as a successful pesticide for other insect pests such as beetles and weevils.

Some authorities have suggested that Europeans learnt of this practice in western India.

Medicinally, in Malaysia the root has been used externally in local treatments for abscesses and also on leprosy sores