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*Picrasma quassioides*

[Synonyms : *Picrasma ailanthoides*, *Picrasma japonica*, *Simaba quassioides*]

**JAPANESE QUASSIA** is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to the Himalayas, China, India and Japan, it has small yellowish-green or dark red flowers and leaves that turn red and yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as *Bering* (Punjabi), *Bhurungi* (Bengali), *Charangi* (Hindi), Indian quassia wood, *Kumu* (Chinese), *Nigaki* (Japanese), *Picrasma*, and *Quassia*.

Warning – roots and bark are poisonous if taken internally to excess. They can cause throat and stomach pains, dizziness, diarrhoea, vomiting and muscular spasms.

*Quassioides* is derived from the genus name *Quassia* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning ‘like plants in that genus’.

In India the fibrous stems, roots and bark are used to make an insecticide.

Medicinally, the bitter-tasting roots and bark have been used in local treatments for tapeworm and for fever. The leaves have been used to ease skin itches.