

*Plumeria rubra* var. *acutifolia*

[Synonyms : *Flos convolutus*, *Plumeria acuminata*, *Plumeria acutifolia*, *Plumieria rubra*]

**PAGODA TREE** is a succulent evergreen shrub or tree (deciduous in temperate regions).

Native to tropical America (especially Guatemala and Mexico) it has very fragrant pink-tinged beneath, yellow-centred, white flowers.

It is also known as *Achin* (Urdu), *Alariya* (Singhalese), *Bunga kubur* (Malay), *Calasusi* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Champa lao* (Thai), *Champey* (Cambodian), Common frangipanni, Dead man's flower, *Dolochampo* (Gujarati), Frangipani (English, German), *Frangipanier* (French), Frangipanni, *Goburchampa* (Bengali), Graveyard tree, *Gulachin* (Hindi), *Gulacin* (Persian), Jasmine tree, *Kallimandarai* (Tamil), *Kamboja* (Javanese), *Kamoja* (Sundanese), *Kishirachampa* (Sanskrit), Mexican frangipani, *Pagodetræ* (Danish), *Planta dos dentes* (Portuguese), *Roter Frangipani* (German), *Sonchampa* (Marathi), Spanish jasmine, *Taroksaga* (Burmese), Temple flower, Temple tree, Tree of life, *Vadaganneru* (Telugu), and *Vellachampakam* (Malayalam).

The fragrance of the flowers is especially noticeable at night.

Warning – the milky sap is poisonous.

*Rubra* is derived from Latin *ruber* (red). *Acutifolia* is derived from Latin *acuti-* (pointed, acute, sharp) and *-folia* (leaved) components meaning 'with sharply pointed leaves'.

For many in the Far East the pagoda tree is a symbol of immortality and its flowers can often be seen depicted in paintings around Hindu shrines. The flowers are offered in Buddhist temples and this evergreen is a familiar sight growing in both Buddhist and Moslem burial grounds, not least in Malaysia and parts of Indonesia.

In Java (now an Indonesian island) the flowers are used to make sweetmeats.

One local belief, delightful in its logic, contends that pagoda tree seeds are the best possible antidote for cobra bites – or they would be if the cobras did not knowingly destroy the fruit pods before the seeds can mature.

The soft lightweight wood has been used for making musical instruments especially drums and tom-toms.

According to some authorities the plant has been applied in veterinary medicine to treat intestinal disorders in horses.

In 1978 the Northern Marianas (a group of islands which are part of the UN Trust Territory of the Pacific and situated in the western Pacific) came under the administration of the United States and adopted pagoda tree as a flower emblem.

Medicinally, local remedies have used the bark to treat some venereal disorders, fever and diarrhoea, and the milky sap as an ingredient in cures for rheumatic pains.