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Quillaja saponaria

SOAP TREE is an evergreen tree. Native to Chile it has small purple-centred, white to greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as Cullay, Panama bark, *Panamaholz* (German), Quillaia, Quillaja, *Seifenrindenbaum* (German), Soap bark, Soapbark tree, Soap bush, and Soap tree bark.

Warning – the bark can be poisonous.

Saponaria is derived from Latin *saponis* (soap) meaning 'soapy like the roots of soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*)'.

Authorities observe that in the 19th Century there was significant trade in the dried inner bark as a type of food. In fact it can still be used as such today in the Middle East where, after extensive processing and the addition of sugar syrup, it makes a white foam or mousse-like accompaniment for pastries (much as cream or ice cream might be used in the West). As an alternative this is also made from dried soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*) root.

Locally the bark is used for washing clothes and abroad eg. in Europe or North America, it is also used commercially for cleaning delicate materials. The tree provides an ingredient for the toiletry industry today as well for making shampoos and foam baths.

Medicinally, it was once used to treat bronchitis and other respiratory disorders.

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