

You are viewing one of thousands of biographies – click below for more, including Search box and access to Plant associated organisations.

[Plant Biographies](#)

[Bibliography](#)

Smilax china

[Synonyms : *Coprosmanthus japonicus*, *Smilax china* var. *taihaiensis*, *Smilax ferox*, *Smilax japonica*, *Smilax pseudo-china*, *Smilax pteropus*, *Smilax taihaiensis*, *Smilax tamnifolia*]

CHINA BRIER is a deciduous climbing shrub. Native to Japan and south-eastern Asian islands (particularly the five small islands of the Moluccas) it has small greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as American chinaroot, Bamboo brier, Bamboovine, Bastard china, Brier root, Bristly greenbrier, Bryony-leaved Jacob's ladder, Bullbrier, Carrion flower, China, China root, China smilax, *Chinawurzel* (German), *Chobchini* (Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit), *Gadong china* (Malay), Dead-man's bryony, False chinaroot, False sarsparilla, Greenbrier, Helfetter, Long-stalked greenbrier, *Sarsaparilla* (German), Sarsparilla, and Virginia sarsparilla.

Warning – large doses can cause nausea and vomiting.

China means 'of or from China'.

China brier is said to have been introduced to China in 1535 and from that time its roots have been eaten as a cooked vegetable there in addition to their use as a medicine. The root which is considered to be an aphrodisiac in some regions is used in India as an alternative to sarsaparilla (*Smilax aristolochiaefolia*).

The roots yield a yellow dye with alum and a brown dye with iron sulphate.

The tough stems have been used to make baskets.

After the shrub reached the North American Continent records show that the Cherokee Indians ate the tuberous roots and used the plant medicinally for treating stomach upsets and rheumatism. They also used it during childbirth and applied it to burns and skin problems.

Medicinally, china brier and sarsaparilla (*Smilax aristolochiaefolia*) are usually considered to be interchangeable. In China the root has been viewed as a reliable cure for gout and syphilis since the 16th Century. Today there as well as elsewhere in the world the root can still be used to treat skin diseases, rheumatism, dysentery and syphilis.